

Folly 591

Chapter 591: Offended the Government Officer (Update 1)

"They're coming, they're coming..." Mrs. Lin shouted excitedly.

The eldest family, initially having walked far away, squeezed toward the courtyard gate as if they had discovered some treasure.

The sound of firecrackers grew closer, and the once pale-faced members of the Old Mu Family now had a bit more rosy complexion.

The great event they've all been hoping for so long is finally here.

"Everyone, let's perk up, keep your energy up, the glory of our Old Mu Family is about to arrive!"

Mr. Mu stood up himself and ordered his sons and daughters-in-law, acting very much the patriarch.

Everyone stood on tiptoe and waited, and from the village entrance came the shouts of the government officer.

"It's the Old Mu Family's joyous occasion, the documents, the documents are here..."

The villagers were already watching the excitement, and upon hearing the sounds, those who hadn't come out began directing, while others followed behind the horse to the Old Mu Family.

This arrival included three government officers: one from Qianzhou Prefecture, one from the county town, and another arranged by the town, together bringing three documents. Without one, Mu Dade continuing the imperial exam wouldn't be easy.

The sound of firecrackers finally reached the entrance of the Old Mu Family, and everyone saw a man in government officer attire hop off a black horse.

There were still bits of unburnt firecrackers tied to the horse's rump.

The crackling sounds were particularly festive.

"Congratulations, Mr. Mu, your son has passed the provincial exam, ranking sixth!" The government officer said to Mr. Mu.

Mr. Mu was instantly overwhelmed with joy, disregarding the documents and bowing deeply twice to the officer.

"Thank you, Lord Officer, thank you, Lord Officer! Our Old Mu Family can finally hold our heads high!"

The other members of the Old Mu Family saw the officer holding red-paper-wrapped documents, and their eyes lit up.

Mrs. Lin boldly stepped past Mr. Mu and grabbed the documents.

She pretended to open and carefully read the documents.

Yet her actions were no different than a bull drinking tea or a wild boar rooting the ground, only adding a bit of humor.

"Old Second Daughter-in-law, what are you doing with the documents? You don't even recognize the characters, hand them over to your elder brother." Mr. Mu looked up, seeing Mrs. Lin holding the documents pretending to understand.

"Father, I've seen it. This thing is genuine!" Mrs. Lin said.

Mrs. Lin's voice was loud, causing the other Old Mu Family members to laugh, but the officer's face changed.

He came to offer congratulations but was made fun of by a farmer woman, and how could he swallow the insult?

He didn't want to stay at the Old Mu Family any longer, only intended to collect his reward quickly and leave.

"Congrats again, Mr. Mu. Your son Mu Dade has passed the exam..."

The officer repeated what he had said before.

Actually, in general, at a time like this, the family of the exam-passer should bring out food prepared for the officer and offer them some money as reward.

The Old Mu Family had never had someone pass the exam before, so naturally, they didn't know these customs.

But the officer didn't realize that the Old Mu Family was ignorant, assuming they were deliberately being difficult, coughed and reminded again.

"Mr. Mu..."

This time, Mu Dazhong interrupted.

"Lord Officer, you don't need to repeat one thing three times; none of us in the Old Mu Family are deaf. My father and brother are both healthy, aren't they?"

Everyone chimed in, but Mrs. Jin noticed something was wrong. As she was about to take out money, the officer quickly mounted his horse and clicked his heels.

The horse sprinted off.

"Wow, that officer is really dedicated; he left without even drinking water!" Mu Xiangxiang, who hadn't spoken, suddenly interjected.

Mrs. Jin then realized they might have offended the officer from Qianzhou Prefecture, because he left without any tea or reward, having prepared nothing...

"It's over. I think we upset the officer from Qianzhou Prefecture. He came without tea, without reward, without any preparation..." Mrs. Jin exclaimed.

"Sister-in-law, you're overthinking it. The officer is from a big place; how could he care about our few pennies?"

He's probably in a hurry to deliver documents to other families. Didn't you see the red embroidered ball hanging on his horse's head? It's about catching the hour!"

Mrs. Lin, acting like an expert, educated Mrs. Jin.

Mrs. Jin didn't believe Mrs. Lin's nonsense, and planned to wait for the other two officers to come and then offer them money. Little did she know, the people from the Old Mu Family waited an entire day.

The second and third documents never arrived.

Those who knelt for a day were nearly ready to fall at the slightest touch.

Mu Dade hadn't kneeling since the afternoon, but his heart was still full of questions.

Why did they deliver the first document, but not the others?

As night fell, Mrs. Jin lay on the bed, unable to figure out the day's events.

She thought it might be because they offended the officer, given that the officer was from Qianzhou Prefecture.

But on a closer think, it seemed unlikely; after all, this was an assignment arranged by the court. Even if offended, they wouldn't dare not send, as imperial exams are not trivial.

"Mr. Dan Dan, what do you think of this?" Mrs. Jin tossed the dilemma to Mu Dade.

"What can I think? It's probably trouble caused by the second family; one told people not to repeat themselves, another doubted the document. How could they not be upset?"

The more Mu Dade spoke, the more he resented the second family.

His second brother had been lazy since childhood, and marrying a wife had brought more troubles.

"So what do we do now?" Mrs. Jin was anxious, as without the documents, nothing could be done.

"For now, there's nothing to worry about. Those local Wang Bas in the village don't know there are three documents. Tomorrow I'll go to the county town to ask about it; this matter can only be solved there."

Mrs. Jin was confused, only thinking Mu Dade was going to find someone for help, unaware that Mu Dade was going to see his childhood sweetheart who had become the County Magistrate's minor wife in the county town.

"Mr. Dan Dan, honestly, I can't stay in this house any longer. The second brother and Mrs. Lin are the kind of people who will hinder you, even if you become an official!" Mrs. Jin said.

Mu Dade understood this well, but his parents were still alive, and if he did anything too outrageous, he'd be scolded.

Mu Dade knew, even though he was his parents' favorite son, the other families often received scolding, yet his father liked saving face. If the other families went out and claimed he had forgotten his roots, Mr. Mu would definitely ask him to take the whole family along.

"Mr. Dan Dan, have you forgotten what you promised me? Even if you have, think about this: who brings the whole family to take office? Our second mistress was abandoned and relies on others for living.

You have to support the younger sister, Xiangxiang, who eats so much, no family can afford it. You have to cover these two, do you really want to divide the hard-earned money with such people?"

When Mrs. Jin talked about these people, it was basically a complaint.

"I don't want to, of course not, but my parents won't pass this hurdle!"

"Then force the Old Mu Family to split up! Once they're split off, they have no reason to depend on us. We only have to take care of my parents, and then we'll live well, won't we?"

Chapter 592: Old Husband and Wife (Second Update)

"That's absolutely impossible!"

Mu Dade immediately retorted.

Those people are like vampires, they wouldn't want to split the family, that's for sure!

"Why not? The fourth branch's wife is bullied the worst by Mom. I don't believe Old Fourth can keep enduring. As for the second branch, I think as long as she sees the benefit of splitting the family, perhaps they'll go for it!

As for Fifth, he hasn't married yet, let's get him married first!"

Mrs. Jin analyzed each situation, which gave Mu Dade a glimmer of hope. After all, he wasn't in a rush to become an official, just take things slow!

"By the way, about the contract the fourth branch signed to sell the third branch's cold noodle recipe, when are we doing that?"

Mrs. Jin still remembered the incident where the fourth branch was tricked by her.

"Wait a bit, we'll talk about it when I come back!"

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Mu Shuangshuang learned about Mu Dade's single document only after Xiao Han mentioned it during dinner.

Mu Shuangshuang sent Yu Si Niang to call Xiao Han, who had already found an excuse and sneaked out, not at all kneeling there.

Still, he didn't forget to ask around and gather information.

After hearing the whole story, Mu Shuangshuang nearly spat out a mouthful of rice.

The Old Mu Family truly was disgraceful; thankfully she didn't go, otherwise, she wouldn't be able to eat now!

Back when she promised Yu Si Niang she'd go when the fireworks sounded, she waited for the sound, then went back to take a nap.

That decision was wiser than ever.

Everyone in the third branch knew there should be three documents for a scholar, as Liu Zian taught Xiao Han, and everyone listened.

Speaking of Liu Zian, Mu Shuangshuang was curious if that guy passed the exam; after all, he was her brother's teacher.

If he passed, maybe they could trick him into tutoring the younger brothers for a few days, possibly helping Xiao Han and Yuanbao gain some experience!

"Sister, why hasn't Uncle's other documents arrived?" Little Zhi asked Mu Shuangshuang in a childish voice.

"That's easy, they offended someone today, and the person is withholding them on purpose!" Mu Shuangshuang replied.

"Ah?" Yu Si Niang suddenly displayed a surprised expression.

"Will this affect Uncle's career?"

Yu Si Niang, in the end, was kind-hearted, still worried about Mu Dade at this point.

It was Mu Dashan who spoke fairly: "This predicament is their own doing. For such an important matter as passing the exam, how could they not prepare some gifts or food?"

So many villagers sent food, yet neither Shuangshuang's grandmother nor anyone else prepared anything to send to them!

Shuangshuang's grandmother is stingy as usual, always wanting to save everything, and now a big mess has happened, it's time for a lesson!"

The man's words were completely truthful, without bias, and quite bold!

Yu Si Niang looked thoroughly charmed, gazing admiringly at Mu Dashan.

The man's face turned slightly awkward, his previous words meant to embolden Yu Si Niang were all forgotten due to nerves!

The couple just stared at each other lovingly, eyes so tender they seemed to overflow with emotion.

The three children saw this and quickly finished their dinner, leaving space for the loving couple.

In the kitchen, as soon as the three children left, Yu Si Niang became like an eighteen-year-old girl, too shy to look at Mu Dashan.

"Shuangshuang's mother, why be shy? We're an old couple, let's be bold about everything!" the man said courageously.

"Mmm!"

Speaking of which, only the third branch, Mu Dashan truly married Yu Si Niang out of love.

The second branch, Mu Dazhong, because of his roguishness and being of no good character, ended up marrying Mrs. Lin who was willing to follow him.

The remaining branches were all arranged by matchmakers, more or less.

Therefore, compared to other branches, the couple from the third branch share the deepest affection.

They could talk about anything.

Unlike the main branch or the second, plotting against each other even in bed.

"Shuangshuang's mother, let's go outside and look at the moon, it looks beautiful tonight!"

Although the moon was said to be beautiful, once outside, they saw a more than half-eaten moon and realized just how nervous they were.

The couple smiled at each other, Mu Dashan finally suggested continuing to watch the moon, allowing them to ease their nerves.

In the shadows, three little heads were watching Mu Dashan and Yu Si Niang.

"Sister, what are Dad and Mom doing?"

Little Zhi had barely opened his mouth when Mu Shuangshuang covered it.

"Shh, Dad and Mom are having a romance, let's hurry back!"

Little Zhi nodded knowingly, and the three children watched Mu Dashan and Yu Si Niang for half an hour, only returning to sleep once the couple showed signs of leaving.

Honestly, Mu Dade passing the exam recently had an undeniable impact on Mu Shuangshuang, especially given her feud with the main branch.

Having beaten up Mrs. Jin and the two women from the main branch, under these circumstances, the main branch wouldn't let the third branch off easily.

However, Mu Shuangshuang also knew that when one is at their peak, decline follows; perhaps the Old Mu Family was reaching its downfall.

When the time comes, how would this big family survive, would they rely on the third branch for food and shelter?

Mu Shuangshuang didn't know.

That doesn't mean such things wouldn't happen in the future.

Mu Shuangshuang had to prepare; the third branch wasn't some sacrificial cow, for the Old Mu to just bleed as they pleased.

It all started by encouraging her parents to toughen up.

Mu Dashan was getting better, but Yu Si Niang was still too easy to bully, which ultimately was due to the mother-in-law issue.

Between in-laws, even if they couldn't get along like mothers and daughters, it shouldn't be as hostile as Old Mrs. Mu against the daughters-in-law, practically mortal enemies.

Even so, Old Mrs. Mu continued to stride around unchecked, no one dared to challenge her.

The more Mu Shuangshuang thought about it, the more she felt the need to quickly establish her own business; starting tomorrow, she'd explore new dishes, ready to open her restaurant once ready with the menu.

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The next day, Mu Dade headed to the county.

The Old Mu Family's people enthusiastically escorted him, seeing him off halfway before stopping.

Yesterday's document restored trust in the Old Mu Family.

Previously, villagers only sent small tokens, now they were sending larger gifts.

Early in the morning, Old Mrs. Mu received a chicken, no less, an egg-laying hen.

A straightforward farmer's family sent it, with no particular motive, just asking for the Old Mu Family's care in the future.

Throughout the morning, the Old Mu Family's front yard was filled with gifts.

Even the third branch had visitors, after all being the scholar's third brother, with their genuine niceness, people were willing to associate with them.

However, all these gifts were declined by the third branch.

The third branch wouldn't take advantage from the main branch, nor accept gifts from those simply trying to climb through connections with the main branch.

From early morning, Mu Shuangshuang was grinding rice, preparing to make rice noodles.

Similar to preparing cold noodles, but suitable for soup, eating it in winter should be quite comforting and warm the stomach.

Chapter 593: Tempting Taste (Third Update)

Mu Shuangshuang pushed the stone mill at a leisurely pace, not feeling too tired. Compared to before, doing chores now was relatively easy.

Perhaps it was because she had been well-fed and cared for over this long period, her strength had increased significantly.

Just as she was thinking about it, Yu Si Niang walked in from outside, holding two square iron boxes in her hands.

"Shuangshuang, these are borrowed from the Fu Family by your mother. They said they didn't have round iron boxes, these were originally meant for making pancakes."

Making rice noodles requires round iron boxes, the center of the box should be flat and even, with no bumps.

Mu Shuangshuang searched around her own home and found nothing that could substitute, so she asked Yu Si Niang to look at the neighbors'.

Yu Si Niang asked several familiar households and finally borrowed from the Fu Family.

"Alright, Mother, when Fengzi cuts the bamboo from the mountain, we can start preparing!"

Mu Shuangshuang was making quite a lot of rice noodles this time.

She planned to hang the prepared rice noodles on bamboo poles to dry, cut them into strips, and then dry them again. When eating, they could be directly thrown into an iron pot to boil.

"Then I'll help you grind the rice paste!"

Yu Si Niang put down the iron boxes and lent Mu Shuangshuang a hand.

With two people pushing the mill, Mu Shuangshuang felt much easier and sped up the milling.

Yu Si Niang would occasionally help by pouring some rice into the mill hole.

Everyone hadn't had breakfast yet, waiting for the rice noodles Shuangshuang mentioned to be ready, and then they would feast.

Yu Si Niang had never seen such a sight and was curious.

"Shuangshuang, I've never seen what you're making before? I can make sweet potato noodles, but not like this."

Many things that Mu Shuangshuang could make were unknown in the Da Ning Dynasty, even Yu Si Niang had never heard of them.

In the Da Ning Dynasty, breakfast mainly consisted of porridge, noodles, and some coarse grain pancakes or steamed buns.

Basically, anything that could save grain while also being filling would do.

However, many things Mu Shuangshuang made were completely outside this range and, importantly, they were especially delicious.

Yu Si Niang's confusion was understandable.

However, explaining too many different things became cumbersome.

Some less complicated things were easy to explain, like experimenting or being taught by someone else, but these delicate items that required tools weren't something locals would know about, nor could they be brushed off with a few words.

"Mother, I learned this in a dream. There was a sister who taught me. Ever since I woke up, every few days I dream of a girl dressed in strange clothes teaching me to make delicious things!"

"What? Strange clothes? Shuangshuang, you're not possessed, are you? I'll go get Granny Liu from the neighboring village, she knows how to deal with these filthy things!" Yu Si Niang looked all tense.

She paused her hands on the mill.

"Mother, how could it be possession? Shuangshuang is a normal person, and the sister taught me good things, teaching me how to cook and support the family, and said you and father are good people, good people deserve good karma!"

Mu Shuangshuang's explanation was somewhat far-fetched.

But Yu Si Niang believed it, and she smiled brightly.

"Our Shuangshuang is blessed; maybe it's the immortals in heaven helping you."

Having said that, Yu Si Niang walked to the kitchen door, knelt down, and kowtowed three times towards the door.

Mu Shuangshuang felt relieved, although this incident led to a misunderstanding by Yu Si Niang.

"Shuangshuang, let's keep busy! If this turns out to be tasty, I'll send some to your grandparents, they've certainly never tasted something made from the guidance of an immortal!" Yu Si Niang said with a smile.

Mu Shuangshuang was taken aback, her mother was just too adorable, she didn't even know what to say!

"Alright! Later, let's give my grandmother some bean sprouts too, she likes them!"

After Mu Shuangshuang finished speaking, she glanced at the stone mill, feeling that the rice paste was nearly done. The iron boxes still hadn't been cleaned, and the stove fire hadn't been started.

Most importantly, Lu Yuanfeng hadn't come back yet.

Mu Shuangshuang estimated that by the time she finished with the tasks here, Lu Yuanfeng would have arrived.

"Mother, leave the work here to me. You go rest, I'll call you when breakfast is ready!"

"I'm going to the pigsty to shovel manure, you stay here and work. If there's anything you need, call me!"

Yu Si Niang had just left when Lu Yuanfeng arrived, he had cut three bamboos as instructed by Mu Shuangshuang, all very straight, with branches completely cleaned.

With a basin of water and a cloth, Mu Shuangshuang went out to the courtyard.

She wiped the three bamboos clean, and washed them twice with water.

Ensuring the bamboo was thoroughly cleaned, she placed them on the rack Lu Yuanfeng had set up.

The prelude was ready, the rest was to make the rice noodles.

Mu Shuangshuang entered the kitchen, lit a fire, put a pot of cold water in the pot, and placed the ground rice paste into the cleaned iron boxes.

After a while, the water in the big iron pot began to boil, and Mu Shuangshuang placed the iron boxes into the pot.

After a while, she took them out, which were now cooked rice noodles.

"It's ready!"

In the iron box, white rice noodles appeared before the two, slightly resembling cold noodles but also different.

Mu Shuangshuang scooped the first piece of rice noodle with a spatula, placed it in a big bowl, and offered it to the Kitchen God.

This was something she learned from Yu Si Niang; whenever something delicious was made, it should first be offered to the Kitchen God to taste, praying for a smooth wind and rain and a bountiful harvest.

The second and third pieces, Mu Shuangshuang set aside.

She cut up the rice noodles she later took out with a knife and put them into another big bowl.

The broth was made when the rice was half-ground, kept warm in the big iron pot beside.

However, there was no fresh meat, only a bit of meat sauce Mu Shuangshuang made earlier when she had nothing to do.

The meat sauce would be mixed into the rice noodles later, with some chili oil, the broth would be poured in, and the fragrance of rice noodles should come out.

Mu Shuangshuang made a bowl for Lu Yuanfeng first, she couldn't leave, the pot still needed to continuously cook rice noodles.

Lu Yuanfeng helped to call Mu Dashan and his family, bringing the three children over to eat rice noodles together.

The finished rice noodles were hung one by one on the bamboo poles, lined up in a complete row.

The rice noodles needed to dry first, so they wouldn't easily fall apart, then be brought back and cut into strips before being dried again outside.

In the kitchen, Mu Shuangshuang busied herself back and forth, Lu Yuanfeng initially tried to help but was too heavy-handed. As soon as he touched them, Mu Shuangshuang's rice noodles would fall into two pieces onto the ground.

After a few times, Mu Shuangshuang stopped letting Lu Yuanfeng touch them.

She scooped out the cooked rice noodles herself with a spatula and took them out to dry.

When Mu Shuangshuang came out again, Mrs. Lin's disagreeable face was already under the bamboo poles where Mu Shuangshuang dried the rice noodles.

She had just finished her business in the outhouse and could already smell the delicious aroma of Mu Shuangshuang's cooking.

If it were in the past, Mrs. Lin would have surely thought she wouldn't get to eat any, assuming that the third branch's brat would surely shoo her away.

But things were different now, her eldest brother had passed the scholar's exam, she was still a scholar's sister-in-law.

Chapter 594: Beat to Death Without Letting Go (Fourth Update)

A mud-legged one from the third branch definitely can't afford to offend her.

If they dare offend her, she'll accuse them of the grave crime of disrespect!

Just thinking about it makes Mrs. Lin feel like her tail is wagging to the sky.

She imagined the third branch bowing low and begging for mercy before her, and unconsciously, she laughed out loud.

Mu Shuangshuang felt like she'd encountered a lunatic, laughing at her early in the morning.

But what really disgusted her was Mrs. Lin's black, unwashed hand after the toilet.

If that thing touches her rice noodles, one batch would be ruined.

"Shuang, what are you making? It smells so good! Quick, let your second aunt taste it!"

As Mrs. Lin spoke, her hand landed on one of the rice noodles.

A black handprint marked the rice noodle, and Mu Shuangshuang was fuming with rage.

"Second aunt, why are you touching my rice noodles with your dirty hands?"

"Shuang, listen to yourself, your second aunt and you are family. Not to mention touching this, even if I wanted to eat it, you should give it to me!"

Mrs. Lin, leveraging her "status," arrogantly confronted Mu Shuangshuang.

"Second aunt, did you eat garlic this morning? Your breath is so strong. I neither owe you nor am I a fool at your disposal. You say eat rice noodles, and I should give you some? Then I wouldn't be in business anymore?" Mu Shuangshuang said with a frosty face and cold eyes.

"Hmph, you stubborn girl, let me tell you, you're the one in the mud now, while I'm the scholar's sister-in-law, protected by the government. Even an official can't do anything to me!"

Mu Shuangshuang found Mrs. Lin's words childish and amusing.

Sister-in-law of a scholar, protected by the government, why doesn't she claim to be the emperor?

Does she think I'm stupid? So easy to fool?

"Second aunt, if you want to dream, go home and do it. Don't make grand dreams in the third branch; I don't have time to play along with your act!"

"You... you..." Mrs. Lin was so angry her face turned green, pointing at Mu Shuangshuang shouting relentlessly.

But nothing came out from her for quite a while.

"What about me? If you don't leave, I'll whack you with a broom!" Mu Shuangshuang picked up a broom from the ground and brandished it at Mrs. Lin.

Mrs. Lin ran away in fright.

Only then did Mu Shuangshuang return to making rice noodles.

She didn't know that as soon as she turned around and went into the kitchen, Mrs. Lin, who had run away, came back.

She was so desperate to eat the rice noodles drying on the bamboo pole that, if the third branch's stinky girl wouldn't give her, she'd steal them!

Mu Shuangshuang was busy in the kitchen when suddenly a whimpering bark from Little Black Dog echoed in the courtyard, followed by Mrs. Lin's cursing.

"Damn thing, dare to bite my pant leg, I'll chop you into pieces!"

Mu Shuangshuang threw down what she was holding, picked up the broom from the ground, and lunged at Mrs. Lin.

Mrs. Lin was too focused on getting Little Black Dog to let go of her pant leg to notice Mu Shuangshuang coming from behind.

Mu Shuangshuang swung the broom onto Mrs. Lin's back, causing her to yelp in pain.

"Ouch, oh my mother, it hurts so much..."

Mrs. Lin's screams were like a pig being slaughtered, while Mu Shuangshuang relentlessly hammered her back with the broom.

Smashing so hard that Mrs. Lin jumped up in pain, yet she clung tightly to a few rice noodles.

One dropped, and Mrs. Lin looked heartbroken, wanting to pick it up, but the pain from Mu Shuangshuang's beating made her focus on running instead.

Chasing Mrs. Lin all the way to the Old Mu Family, Mu Shuangshuang finally stopped.

She put down the broom and returned to the kitchen.

Lu Yuanfeng had been kept busy in the kitchen. Despite the commotion, Mu Shuangshuang didn't let Lu Yuanfeng help. Seeing her return, Lu Yuanfeng was anxious.

"Did you get hurt? Your second aunt isn't easy to deal with." Lu Yuanfeng hurriedly took Mu Shuangshuang's hand, checking back and forth.

"I'm fine. I beat up my second aunt, I doubt she'll dare next time!"

Beating Mrs. Lin, Mu Shuangshuang thought of how it was usually done sneakily, yet this time it was done openly, perhaps for the first time.

Serves her right for grabbing things arbitrarily with her long hands!

Lu Yuanfeng felt relieved and, coupled with Shuangshuang's actions, was quite amused for a while.

Old Mu Family

Mrs. Lin's crisis was resolved; she didn't even mind her burning back.

She grabbed a piece of rice noodle and stuffed it into her mouth.

The rice noodles, without any added ingredients, had a good texture but were tasteless.

Yet Mrs. Lin still ate them with great enjoyment.

There's no denying it, things stolen from the third branch taste better than other things.

Mrs. Lin finished one piece and was about to eat another when Old Mrs. Mu appeared.

"Second daughter-in-law, are you here to let maggots grow? Did you muck out the pigpen? Was Dog Egg's aunt's clothes washed?"

In fact, Old Mrs. Mu had long assigned those tasks to Mrs. Liu of the fourth branch, but when she caught Mrs. Lin lazing around, she decided to reassign the tasks.

"What's in your hand?" Old Mrs. Mu raised her voice, asking sternly.

Mrs. Lin quickly hid the remaining pieces of rice noodles behind her, looking guilty.

"Mom, it's nothing. You're seeing things. I just went to the toilet; there's nothing in my hands!" Mrs. Lin said with a flattering smile.

"You old hag, you think I'm blind, something that big, you think I can't see? You better hand it over, or I'll skin you alive!"

Terrified, Mrs. Lin handed over the rice noodles she had.

She explained, "Mom, this is the food from the third branch; you can't take it!"

"Can't, hmm!" Old Mrs. Mu laughed as if hearing a funny joke.

"No one in the Old Mu Family dares tell me no, you lie proper! And, do you think I'm stupid?"

The third branch would skin you alive; they wouldn't give you food. You're fooling pigs! Give me those things!"

Old Mrs. Mu stretched out her hand, and all the rice noodles in Mrs. Lin's hand went into hers.

Mrs. Lin pulled a face like a defeated rooster, drooping in dejection.

Those were things she got after a beating, how could...

Now, Mrs. Lin wished she could strangle Old Mrs. Mu.

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County Town

Mu Dade wandered alone in the county for half an hour before finally finding the place where the County Magistrate's family lived.

This time, Mu Dade vowed to see Ruan Xiao Jiao and ask for her help!

Ps: Yesterday, I wasn't feeling well and went to the hospital. I should say I've been unwell lately and was just holding up until I couldn't bear it anymore before going. It seems quite serious...

The next two days, I'll be at the hospital for drips, which delayed yesterday's two updates, for which I deeply apologize.

The missing Chapters will be made up. Not a single one will be missed.

Fengfeng's typing speed isn't fast, and the plot needs consideration. If only I had four hands, I could update a lot more every day...

A huge thanks for everyone's support!

Chapter 595: Hugging a Woman's Thigh (Part 1)

Mu Dade stood at the entrance of the County Magistrate's family's villa for a long time, not daring to go in.

First, he was afraid of being caught and gossiped about, second, he feared it could hurt his future official career. But if he didn't go in, he couldn't see Ruan Xiao Jiao.

After all, she was the County Magistrate's little wife, not someone just anyone could meet easily.

Eventually, Mu Dade thought of a plan. He gave a couple of Copper Coins to a little girl on the street to fetch Ruan Xiao Jiao.

He himself found a nearby tavern, rented a private room, and quietly waited for Ruan Xiao Jiao's arrival.

Ruan Xiao Jiao came around dinnertime.

Wearing a green gauze skirt with a jade bead hairpin on her head, she first froze upon seeing Mu Dade, and then burst into tears.

"Brother Dade, you are Brother Dade... I thought, I thought..."

After more than ten years, Mu Dade was moved seeing his childhood sweetheart.

He spread his arms, wanting to hug Ruan Xiao Jiao, but suddenly remembered her current status and stopped himself abruptly.

After a long pause, he said, "Jiaojiao, all these years, I owe you an apology, it's my fault!"

Ruan Xiao Jiao was touched and quickly shook her head.

"No, no, it's not your fault..."

Upon seeing Ruan Xiao Jiao's attitude, Mu Dade suddenly felt he still had a chance.

What Mu Dade couldn't forget over these years were Ruan Xiao Jiao's clear eyes. When he married Mrs. Jin, Ruan Xiao Jiao cried uncontrollably in private; Mu Dade still remembers it all.

"Jiaojiao, do you really not blame me?"

"I don't blame you. Jiaojiao always remembers the young boy who studied in Er Gui Village." Ruan Xiao Jiao replied firmly.

"Jiaojiao, at the time, I did wrong, I shouldn't have..." Mu Dade, pretending to retreat, began to express his pain about marrying Mrs. Jin.

"Back then, Mrs. Jin climbed into my bed, and my father, for the sake of face, forced me to marry her. I couldn't sleep day or night, always thinking of how you cried uncontrollably in front of me!"

"Several times, I dreamt of eloping with you, but just after leaving Er Gui Village, Mrs. Jin would catch us, have my bones broken, and even then our hands never came apart..."

"Jiaojiao, how wonderful would it have been if it were you I married back then?"

Mu Dade's last sentence was gentle in tone and regretful in expression, making Ruan Xiao Jiao gaze at the man before her.

Even in fine clothes, he couldn't hide his unwell appearance.

Ruan Xiao Jiao was somewhat softened, especially when Mu Dade voiced the last sentence.

But what could she do? She is now the County Magistrate's little wife and can do nothing.

"Brother Dade, are you encountering some difficulties? Tell Jiaojiao, Jiaojiao now even has some say in front of the County Magistrate, and as long as she can help Brother Dade, Jiaojiao certainly will!" said Ruan Xiao Jiao.

Mu Dade was moved, seeing the unchanged visage of over ten years and the woman still considerate of him after so long; in a rush, he told Ruan Xiao Jiao everything.

About the paperwork, he said he was fooled by his family, and while he went back for a sip of water, Qianzhou Prefecture's government officer was angered away by his family. The second and third documents never came out, and he asked Ruan Xiao Jiao whether to continue taking exams or to become an official.

"Brother Dade, your paperwork for passing should be in the County Magistrate's Mansion, with County Magistrate Zhang in charge. I can help you inquire about it.

As for whether to continue taking exams, I think you might as well try. If you succeed, you'll meet more people and gain greater benefits!"

"Regarding the official position, don't drop it, because in this world, we can only hold on to some hopes. By the way, I know the County Magistrate currently needs a secretary to manage paperwork. Although it's not a major position, it can be considered a government official in the county."

"Given Brother Dade's good results this time, I believe the Master will surely hire you!"

Ruan Xiao Jiao's words made Mu Dade feel his trip was indeed worthwhile; all the tricky problems were solved, even the matter of becoming an official was arranged.

The more Mu Dade looked, the more he felt he was blind back then.

He actually married Mrs. Jin for the little benefits of her family.

Although Mrs. Jin climbed into his bed, if he had insisted on not marrying her, the Jin Family couldn't have done anything.

Finally, he feels vindicated now. As long as he interacts more with Jiaojiao, she will eventually fall for him again.

"Jiaojiao, it's getting late, let me see you home!" Mu Dade offered.

Ruan Xiao Jiao nodded with a smile.

The two of them, just like when they first confirmed their feelings for each other, Ruan Xiao Jiao walked ahead, leading the way for Mu Dade, who leisurely followed behind.

At the entrance to the County Magistrate's family's villa, Mu Dade reluctantly watched Ruan Xiao Jiao.

And Ruan Xiao Jiao too, looking at Mu Dade, her eyes unwilling to move away.

"Jiaojiao, you should go in now, don't keep the County Magistrate waiting! And remember, always, I... I have you in my heart!"

At this moment, Ruan Xiao Jiao's heart was pounding like a startled deer.

All the emotions she had suppressed came flooding out.

She resolved that she had to make it work for Mu Dade!

Back in the mansion, Ruan Xiao Jiao instructed a maid to bring a bowl of ginseng soup, which she personally delivered to the County Magistrate's study.

Ruan Xiao Jiao had always been lukewarm, so her sudden enthusiasm surprised County Magistrate Zheng.

"Jiaojiao, what's happened? Did Xiu'er give you trouble?"

The back courtyard of Magistrate Zheng was generally harmonious, with just one daughter, Zheng Xiu, who caused mischief every day and was now grounded by Zheng Zhi. But she could sneak out to do such mischief as well.

"No, Xiu'er has been in her room all this time, I just wanted to come see you!"

The people below mentioned that the stone bridge on the official road collapsed a few days ago, causing delays in some scholar's documents. Is it true, sir?"

"Jiaojiao, you are thoughtful. This is indeed true! However, the stone bridge has been repaired now, yet there is still one troubling matter weighing on my mind!" Magistrate Zheng frowned.

"What is troubling you so much, sir? Jiaojiao is willing to share the burden!"

Ruan Xiao Jiao suspected the matter likely involved Mu Dade.

The documents for the entire county had been delivered except for Mu Dade's, which were held back.

"Ah, it's regarding a scholar from Qingshan Town. Somehow, he offended the official delivering the documents, and now neither the town nor the county's documents can be sent. It's quite the headache for me!"

A document is of no use to the county government, not something one can consume, after all.

"How can one government officer have such influence over the county government?" Ruan Xiao Jiao was puzzled.

"The poor scholar was unlucky. That officer has some familial relation to the governor, and I'm just complying temporarily with their higher instructions."

Chapter 596: Give Me a Son

The Mu Family really handled this matter too foolishly this time.

People warned them several times, yet instead of realizing their mistake, they made that government officer feel like he was being played.

In such a situation, it's no wonder there will be trouble when he returns!

County Magistrate Zheng is a good official, but even a good official must follow orders from above; he has to do as told by his superiors.

He really didn't want to hold onto a piece of official document; after all, it's of no use even if he had it.

"Does the master plan to keep suppressing the scholar's document? Won't this have an impact on you, master? After all, the imperial exam is a big deal; if someone with ill intentions uses it..."

Ruan Xiao Jiao voiced her thoughts, mainly seeking to exonerate Mu Dade.

"I've considered what Jiaojiao mentioned, but the higher-ups didn't express any intention of not giving it, just said to hold it temporarily! I guess that government officer isn't particularly capable; otherwise, he wouldn't just be a government officer!"

Hearing this from County Magistrate Zheng, Ruan Xiao Jiao felt relieved, believing Mu Dade still had hope.

"Then, when does the master plan to give the document to the scholar?" Ruan Xiao Jiao asked.

It was at this moment that County Magistrate Zheng sensed something was amiss; Ruan Xiao Jiao rarely inquired about these matters, so why was she so concerned about this scholar this time?

"Jiaojiao, do you have any difficulties? Or do you know this person?"

County Magistrate Zheng hadn't looked at the document; this matter was mainly managed by his county magistrate. With the clerical position in charge of documents temporarily vacant, no one had reminded him either.

"To be honest with the master, this person is from my village. It's rare for our village to produce a scholar, and being distant relatives of my family, my parents asked me to inquire."

Ruan Xiao Jiao didn't hide the fact that she and Mu Dade were from the same village because this would be known sooner or later, as long as Mu Dade took the position of the clerk.

As for the distant relatives, Ruan Xiao Jiao was merely helping Mu Dade.

"Since he's Jiaojiao's distant relative, I'll have someone deliver it tomorrow!" With one sentence, County Magistrate Zheng resolved Ruan Xiao Jiao's concerns.

Mu Dade's crisis was temporarily averted!

The matter of the clerk, however, still needed to be discussed.

At dawn the next day, Ruan Xiao Jiao left the residence to find Mu Dade at the inn.

After informing Mu Dade about the document, he was so excited that he nearly hugged and kissed Ruan Xiao Jiao fiercely, but unfortunately, Ruan Xiao Jiao's status had changed now, and without her consent, he couldn't touch her!

"Xiao Jiao, I should thank you, Mu Dade, for this matter. If you ever need me, Mu Dade, just speak up. Whether it's going through fire or water, I will not hesitate!" Mu Dade said.

"Brother Dade, I willingly helped you with this. Quickly go back and talk with your wife properly; in this day and age, there's nothing that can't be resolved through communication!"

Ruan Xiao Jiao carefully advised Mu Dade, just like when they were young, urging Mu Dade to focus on his studies every day and not to think about anything else.

"Jiaojiao, I was really wrong..." Mu Dade suddenly kneeled before Ruan Xiao Jiao, sobbing bitterly.

Ruan Xiao Jiao still had feelings for Mu Dade, and seeing him like this, she panicked and hugged him tightly.

"Brother Dade, don't be like this..."

The two of them didn't know who took off their clothes first, but when they came to, they were already intimately intertwined, yearning for what they had never done in their youth.

"Jiaojiao, have you thought it through?" Even at the crucial moment, Mu Dade didn't forget to remind Ruan Xiao Jiao.

Ruan Xiao Jiao blushed and nodded. At this point, how could she resist?

Mu Dade rolled over, pressing down on Ruan Xiao Jiao, pushing against her like a mother pig rooting around, making noises like a pig eating from his mouth.

Ruan Xiao Jiao's body melted like water, allowing Mu Dade to take as he wished...

On this day, Mu Dade tasted the body he had yearned for over a decade.

On this day, Mu Dade understood the meaning of absolute compliance.

On this day, Mu Dade realized that women are truly made of water.

All the pent-up desires accumulated over several days were released in one burst to Ruan Xiao Jiao, leaving Mu Dade completely refreshed and ecstatic. He even thought that Ruan Xiao Jiao might already be carrying his child, his son, Mu Dade's son!

Ruan Xiao Jiao fulfilled all of Mu Dade's fantasies, also making him realize how excessive Mrs. Jin was by contrast, not even a strand compared to her!

Men like to compare women, and Mu Dade was no exception.

Ruan Xiao Jiao was more beautiful than Mrs. Jin.

Her temperament was better than Mrs. Jin.

Her family background was the only thing Mrs. Jin had over her, but now Ruan Xiao Jiao was the County Magistrate's concubine, something a village woman like Mrs. Jin couldn't compare to.

Afterward, Mu Dade held Ruan Xiao Jiao and said, "Xiao Jiao, wait for me to go to the Capital, pass the exam, and become a Champion Scholar; then I'll marry you!"

At this moment, Mu Dade's words were sweet and comforting to Ruan Xiao Jiao, filling her heart with desires.

No matter how well the County Magistrate treated her, she was just a concubine. Over the years, the County Magistrate never visited her family or saw her parents, as if that's the life a concubine must endure.

What the first wife has, the concubine cannot.

Ruan Xiao Jiao wasn't greedy, just wanting someone to marry her properly and take her home proudly!

"But what about your wife?" Ruan Xiao Jiao hesitated to ask, deep down hoping Mu Dade would give her the answer she wanted.

"I'll divorce her! If it weren't for her, we would have already been husband and wife, with many children by now.

She is nothing more than a venomous woman. She doesn't even serve my parents, and even when I'm preparing for exams, all she thinks about is living well for herself.

Back then, if she hadn't gotten into my bed, we would have lived a harmonious life, not facing difficulties even to meet!"

Mu Dade spared no effort in demeaning Mrs. Jin, deliberately forgetting the hardships and sacrifices she made while following him.

In fact, Mu Dade had long considered taking a concubine; Mrs. Jin having given birth to two daughters and not a son has already violated the Seven Grounds for Divorce. If it wasn't for her decent family background, he would have done it long ago.

Now that he's a scholar and perhaps a major official in the future, Mrs. Jin's family background was no longer necessary.

He could dismiss Mrs. Jin anytime for any reason.

However, this reason couldn't be shared with Ruan Xiao Jiao, as women tend to dream, and he wanted to leave the best impression with her.

"Brother Dade, I don't ask for any formal status, and I will do my best to help you in becoming the clerk!"

If there was any affection left for Mu Dade from before, now she already considered Mu Dade her man.

In matters concerning her man, she was determined to complete them even at the cost of her life.

"Jiaojiao, thank you for all your efforts. Rest assured, I will never let you down!" Mu Dade embraced the naked Ruan Xiao Jiao, deeply moved.

They gazed into each other's eyes for a long time, and eventually, Mu Dade once again leaned in...

Chapter 597: Proposing Marriage to Mu Family's Little Aunt (Three More Releases)

Mu Dade stayed in the county for half a month, and the remaining two documents had already been sent to the Old Mu Family.

And his job as an official gradually had some progress.

Mu Dade wrote a letter to the Old Mu Family about the possibility of his official duties, explaining the matter in the letter.

When the letter from the county arrived, the entire Old Mu Family was buzzing with excitement, each of them thinking that Mu Dade was going to be an official, and they would enter the city. Even their posture was straighter than before.

More importantly, the previously unnoticed daughters of the Old Mu Family had suitors lining up at their door.

Matchmaker Sun wiggled her hips, her handkerchief flying in her hand.

On this day, Matchmaker Sun went to propose marriage for the youngest aunt of the Old Mu Family. Now that Mu Dade had become a scholar, the future was full of possibilities, and Mu Xiangxiang's status had greatly increased.

Old Mu Family

Matchmaker Sun talked about this matter with Mr. Mu and Old Mrs. Mu.

Old Mrs. Mu had long intended to arrange a marriage for Mu Xiangxiang, and so did Mr. Mu.

"We definitely have no objection to proposing to someone; our Xiangxiang is indeed at the age for marriage. It's just that who do you have in mind?"

Old Mrs. Mu didn't want Mu Xiangxiang to marry too far away.

Mu Xiangxiang had never done any chores since childhood, and she wouldn't wash clothes or cook. Old Mrs. Mu wouldn't feel at ease if she wasn't under her watch.

Besides, her Xiangxiang was thin. If she didn't nourish her body, it would hurt her as a mother.

"I do have quite a few people proposing!"

Mu Dade becoming a scholar was a sensation across villages, and many wanted to follow his family for better days.

"Then tell us!" said Old Mrs. Mu.

"There's a Zhang family in Dahuo Village, with twenty acres of land. Their son is twenty this year, quite a match for Xiangxiang!"

"There's a Zhao family in Tie Dao Village, raising ten old sows. If Xiangxiang marries their son, she'd never worry about having meat!"

Dahuo Village was where Mu Zhenzhen married, and Old Mrs. Mu would never let her daughter go there. She refused outright.

"Not Dahuo Village! A pig butcher from Tie Dao Village doesn't match our Xiangxiang. Our Xiangxiang is the sister of a scholar; she deserves someone educated, not a pig butcher!"

Old Mrs. Mu said sternly.

Frankly speaking, Matchmaker Sun wasn't very willing to match for Mu Xiangxiang.

She had eaten at the table with Mu Xiangxiang, and a large bowl, Mu Xiangxiang would eat four or five bowls alone.

Which farm family could afford to keep such an eating wife, who wouldn't grow tall, only would be a spendthrift!

But she couldn't withdraw; if Mu Xiangxiang's match was made by someone else, as the primary matchmaker, she'd lose face.

Mr. Mu puffed on his pipe with a nod, giving a silent approval similar to Old Mrs. Mu.

Mu Xiangxiang's marriage was the first among these girls, she must marry well, or the subsequent granddaughters would not marry well!

"Then there's our village, the Shen family at the village entrance has five acres of land and a scholar brother-in-law. If Xiangxiang marries there, and the Shen family gets a scholar-in-law, Xiangxiang will be prosperous on both sides!" Matchmaker Sun continued.

Who knew that Old Mrs. Mu jumped up and countered: "That's not okay, the Shen family is so poor, isn't my daughter marrying to suffer? Matchmaker Sun, are you sincerely matching for my daughter or not, why no good quality?"

Matchmaker Sun's mouth went askew.

There really were quite a few wanting prime meat, given Mu Xiangxiang's condition, did she want to marry into the palace as an Imperial Concubine?

Matchmaker Sun politely asked, "So what conditions does the old sister want, I, Matchmaker Sun, will ask, will find!"

Old Mrs. Mu's expression eased somewhat.

"I don't have many conditions, my eldest is a scholar, and now he's about to become an official. Later, our family will be soaring, others following Old Mu Family is a chance to enjoy prosperity!"

"To marry our Xiangxiang, the husband must be tall and have a better physique than the eldest of the Lu Family!"

"To marry our Xiangxiang, he must be wealthy. My Xiangxiang deserves to be a lady, never touching spring water, the family must have at least twenty acres... No, at least fifty acres of land so Xiangxiang never worries for food and clothes!"

"Of course, it's best to find someone close by, we're moving to the county, you must find someone from the county for Xiangxiang too!"

Old Mrs. Mu listed so many conditions in one go, Matchmaker Sun was stunned!

Not even a Champion Scholar's sister would dare ask such demands.

In her heart, Matchmaker Sun despised the Old Mu Family, always feeling Old Mu Family put on airs, boasting!

"Old sister, your conditions seem too high, Xiangxiang is only a scholar's sister, not the scholar herself. With these conditions, others could marry a landlord's daughter!"

Matchmaker Sun spoke earnestly, wanting Old Mrs. Mu to know her worth and stop daydreaming.

Who knew, Old Mrs. Mu jumped up directly, cursing Matchmaker Sun.

"You wretched old woman, when you match for others, you find the best, but for our Xiangxiang, finding bad ones, you heartless old woman, Xiangxiang's match doesn't need you!"

Saying this, Old Mrs. Mu grabbed the stool off the ground and threw it at Matchmaker Sun, nearly hitting her.

Matchmaker Sun didn't care anymore. Whoever wanted this business could have it. She yelled loudly.

"You wretched old woman, it's just your son being a scholar, what are you showing off? You haven't become an official's wife yet, be careful the chicken flies, the egg breaks, and you have nothing! Then you'll still be a mud leg, deserving a life of being trampled!"

Matchmaker Sun had never been so angry, once she started cursing, she wouldn't stop.

Old Mrs. Mu was fuming, absolutely couldn't let anyone talk about her being an official's wife.

"Granny Sun, I'll tear your mouth today!"

Saying this, Old Mrs. Mu charged at her, tangling up with Matchmaker Sun.

Mr. Mu realized the seriousness only now, stepping in to mediate.

"What are you arguing for, isn't today about proposing for Xiangxiang?" Mr. Mu said.

"Propose what! Your daughter is made of gold and wants a county husband-in-law. I, Matchmaker Sun, will say it straight. With your daughter's appetite, eating more than pigs, only if he doesn't have his mind clamped by a door, whoever marries your daughter is doomed for eight generations!"

"You dare talk about Xiangxiang, I'll fight you!" Old Mrs. Mu held Matchmaker Sun's shoulder and slammed her head on Matchmaker Sun's forehead.

With a dull "thud," all that remained in Matchmaker Sun's head was a buzzing sound, Old Mrs. Mu took the chance to slap Matchmaker Sun hard.

Matchmaker Sun cried out in pain.

"Murder! Mu Dade's family is murdering..."

Chapter 598: You've Taken a Fancy to This Old Thing

"Old woman, what are you doing? This is Matchmaker Sun, who is supposed to find a match for your daughter. If you kill her, who will find a husband for your daughter?"

Mr. Mu tried to stop the frenzied Old Mrs. Mu.

"You old fool, at a time like this, you're still defending this woman. Could it be that you fancy this Granny Sun?"

"You... how can you say such a thing, you shameless woman?" Mr. Mu was so angry that he almost threw away his dry tobacco.

But Old Mrs. Mu was relentless.

"I just know this old hag keeps running to our Old Mu Family, it's because you have a fling with her! You filthy coward, Mu Dabiao, I've given you children, and yet you dare to sneak around behind my back. Today, I'm going to beat this shameless woman to death!"

Mr. Mu had never suffered such grievances. He was so enraged by Old Mrs. Mu that he almost coughed up blood, standing there coughing uncontrollably.

"You... you..."

The most pitiful was Matchmaker Sun. Old Mrs. Mu had truly lost her temper, sitting on Matchmaker Sun's head, continuously pulling at her.

Pig-like squeals echoed out.

Meanwhile, Mu Shuangshuang was in the courtyard, counting the materials needed for the banquet at Zhao Village tomorrow.

Upon hearing the noise, she couldn't help but glance towards the direction of the Old Mu Family.

Just then, Yu Si Niang came over. Mu Shuangshuang asked, "Mom, that sounds like Matchmaker Sun over at Grandma's place. What's happening?"

Yu Si Niang nodded.

"I went over to talk to your fourth aunt, asking her to help make a bowl of rice for your father tomorrow. We have all the materials at home.

Matchmaker Sun is indeed there, supposedly finding a match for your little aunt. But something was said, and your grandma began hitting Matchmaker Sun, even saying something about your grandpa and Matchmaker Sun..."

Yu Si Niang couldn't even say the rest.

Because it was simply too vulgar.

Not something a woman would say.

Mu Shuangshuang found it bewildering and began analyzing things in detail with Yu Si Niang.

"It must be that Grandma said something offensive, or set super high conditions for Auntie's marriage prospects, like demanding the son of a landlord or insisting on a hundred acres of fertile land."

"Huh? Our family only has these conditions. Even if your uncle became an official, it's the glory of your uncle's family line. It has nothing to do with your little aunt!" Yu Si Niang was astounded.

"That's the problem. In Grandma's eyes, Auntie is an extraordinary beauty. She doesn't fancy just anyone. Even when she spoke of Fengzi, she would only call him a fallen hunter, a mud-legged peasant. Deep down, perhaps she thinks only the position of Empress is worthy of Auntie."

Yu Si Niang gasped.

The position of Empress is the country's mother. Without a prominent family background, or unless one is the reincarnation of an immortal, who can assume such a position?

"Your grandma's demands are too high. Your little aunt can't possibly reach such a status," Yu Si Niang said frankly.

"That's right! Mom, you see, even you say so. Matchmaker Sun, being clever, would definitely not let Grandma have such unrealistic ideas, so it's normal for them to have a fight."

Yu Si Niang then nodded in agreement. Her daughter was indeed clever, analyzing the situation thoroughly.

"What about what your grandma said about your grandpa..."

Everyone loves gossip, and Yu Si Niang is no exception.

Before she came, she even heard Mrs. Lin talking about using the relationship between Grandpa and Matchmaker Sun to find a wealthy family for Qing. It didn't matter if they were mud-legged peasants.

"It must be false. Grandma once claimed Grandpa took a fancy to Sister-in-law Bitu, and what happened? Now she is forcing my eldest cousin to marry Sister-in-law Bitu? I bet it's because the two matriarchs were fighting, Grandpa tried to intervene, and Grandma blamed him!"

Mr. Mu, though biased and prideful, wouldn't stoop to sneaking around.

Instead, it's Mu Dade and Mu Dazhong, and her fifth uncle, who might do such things.

"That's good, that's good..." Yu Si Niang patted her chest, showing a face of relief.

"By the way, Shuangshuang, have you finished checking the materials for tomorrow's banquet? Do you need Mom's help? Are you certain the fish can be delivered tomorrow?"

It's Yu Si Niang's first time helping her daughter organize a banquet, and she's unfamiliar with many things. She's afraid something might go wrong, so she keeps reminding her.

"No need for your help. Just watch out tomorrow. I'll teach you how to cook the banquet dishes!"

The fish you mentioned don't need to be delivered tomorrow. Fengzi already took a cart to transport them early this morning.

I'll process them all once they're brought back, salting them for preservation, especially since the weather won't spoil them easily!"

Yu Si Niang finally nodded with satisfaction.

"Fengzi is really good. Going out so early in such cold weather, you have a keen eye, Shuangshuang."

Yu Si Niang, as the mother-in-law looking at her son-in-law, grows fonder the more she looks.

Mu Shuangshuang covered her mouth, chuckling to herself, thinking: Of course, what she chooses is the best!

"Mom, go rest. I'll continue to check everything."

These things were prepared by Mu Shuangshuang for several days, and tomorrow, she, Fengzi, her mom, as well as Huang Da and Huang Er, and Mu Dalang, will head to Zhao Village to organize a wedding banquet for Zhao Si's family.

Huang Da and Huang Er were laborers hired by Mu Shuangshuang for serving dishes.

This banquet, Zhao Si's family entrusted everything to Mu Shuangshuang for three taels of silver.

Even the servers weren't provided by them.

After a quick calculation, she realized she could earn at least two taels of silver from this outing!

The largest piece, the pork, was from a wild boar Fengzi hunted in the mountains, enabling her to earn so much.

Having finished checking the raw materials, Mu Shuangshuang heard Matchmaker Sun still screaming in Old Mu's courtyard, seemingly still being beaten by Old Mrs. Mu.

Just as she was considering whether to go over and take a look, the commotion intensified.

Driven by curiosity, Mu Shuangshuang moved her feet, making sure to sneak over without being noticed.

In the hall of the Old Mu Family

Matchmaker Sun's carefully done makeup was smeared, her clothes were torn by Old Mrs. Mu, and her hair somehow got disheveled by the old woman, making her look no different from a madwoman.

Matchmaker Sun should have never provoked Old Mrs. Mu, and that was Mu Shuangshuang's opinion!

"Third lady's, your grandma's gone mad, please save me..."

Upon spotting Mu Shuangshuang, Matchmaker Sun acted as if grabbing a lifeline, crying out while approaching Mu Shuangshuang for cover.

Mu Shuangshuang felt that Matchmaker Sun treated her fairly, and recalling a previous promise regarding Mu Dalang, she decided to speak.

"Grandma, what are you doing? If you beat Matchmaker Sun, you won't find a match for the sisters at home? My uncle's two daughters won't find matches? If others hear that Grandma beat Matchmaker Sun, who would dare come to our Old Mu Family?"

"Get lost, you treacherous wench, helping outsiders instead of me. Be careful the Duke of Thunder doesn't strike you dead!" Old Mrs. Mu cursed Mu Shuangshuang, while her hands continued to slap fiercely without mercy.

Chapter 599: Mrs. Lin's Dirty Tactics (Part 1)

"Grandpa, are you just going to watch as Grandma beats someone to death? My uncle has just become a scholar, and if this gets out of hand, our Old Mu Family might not be able to keep a single title! Do you want to see all my uncle's years of effort go to waste?"

Mu Shuangshuang spoke slowly and deliberately.

No matter how Old Mrs. Mu cursed at her, she didn't care, knowing it would all rebound back.

Mr. Mu originally wanted to intervene, and now hearing Mu Shuangshuang's words, he became even more anxious.

"Second and Fifth, why are you still standing outside? If Matchmaker Sun is beaten to death, your good days are over too!"

Only then did Mu Danian and Mu Dazhong, who had been watching the commotion, reluctantly come inside.

They pulled Old Mrs. Mu away.

At this point, Old Mrs. Mu still wanted to jump up and hit Matchmaker Sun.

Matchmaker Sun had already gotten up from the ground in fright.

As she retreated, Matchmaker Sun pointed at Old Mrs. Mu and angrily cursed, "Old Mu Family, what happened today, I will let the entire village know! You're all depraved, doing inhuman things!

I will go tell the village chief, you cannot just beat people without reason. I'll have the village chief deal with your Old Mu Family. I'll also let everyone know that no one should marry into the Old Mu Family, whoever does will have bad luck!"

Limping, Matchmaker Sun headed out of the yard, and with her departure, Mu Xiangxiang's marriage proposal was dashed.

Old Mrs. Mu continued to curse in the main room, and seeing that there was nothing left for her to do, Mu Shuangshuang turned to leave, giving Old Mrs. Mu no chance to recover and curse her.

Mrs. Lin, seeing that no one at the Old Mu Family noticed, followed Matchmaker Sun out of the Mu Family house.

"Matchmaker Sun, Matchmaker Sun..." Mrs. Lin called after her.

"What do you want?" Matchmaker Sun disdainfully rolled her eyes at Mrs. Lin.

"Matchmaker Sun, I'm here to apologize to you. What my mother did earlier was really too much. I know Xiangxiang's personality well, even if others don't. You might think she just eats a lot, but she's actually very lazy."

"She even has Qing from the fourth branch wash her underwear. And when it comes to beating and scolding her nieces, she's quite skilled. Who would dare take someone like that?"

Mrs. Lin seized the opportunity to disparage Mu Xiangxiang to the fullest.

In the end, Mrs. Lin had her own considerations in mind.

Mu Xiangxiang was her brother's sister, her daughter Qingqing's aunt. No matter how you looked at it, Mu Dade and Mu Xiangxiang would have a closer relationship.

If Matchmaker Sun first arranged a marriage for Mu Xiangxiang, without even mentioning the dowry, her daughter would suffer losses. And when it came to choosing a family, the best ones would be picked over by Xiangxiang. She had to act first and find a better family for her daughter than for Mu Xiangxiang.

"Don't worry. I definitely won't arrange a match for Mu Xiangxiang. With her like this, she deserves to be left an old maid by that damn old lady, causing trouble for the Old Mu Family her whole life!" Matchmaker Sun muttered curses.

Mrs. Lin was completely embarrassed. Mu Xiangxiang had to marry; the Old Mu Family couldn't support such a useless person.

Otherwise, she'd be stuck cleaning up after Mu Xiangxiang, and she couldn't stand that.

"Matchmaker Sun, the families you introduced to Xiangxiang before, what are their conditions? Is our Qingqing suitable for them? Our Qingqing is impeccable in both character and looks, and being this year's weaver, marrying her will bring prosperity to the whole family!"

Mrs. Lin finally got to the point.

Matchmaker Sun, being the savvy woman she was, immediately understood Mrs. Lin's intentions.

"Your Qing is indeed good and matches those young men well! I'll go back and ask to see what they say, and I'll inform you of the results!"

Matchmaker Sun didn't dare to make any promises, as some people might have been interested in Xiangxiang due to her being the scholar's sister. Although Mu Qingqing was also part of the Old Mu Family, she was a generation away, and who knew if it would still matter.

Matchmaker Sun's politeness was taken by Mrs. Lin as assurance. She quickly leaned in.

"Matchmaker Sun, tell me about the conditions of those families so I can prepare and have a word with our Qingqing. She's a shy one, and if I don't give her a heads-up, it might get complicated later!"

Matchmaker Sun described the families to Mrs. Lin.

The more she listened, the happier Mrs. Lin became.

She found each family quite suitable.

"Matchmaker Sun, let's settle on this for now. Don't tell other families about these. I'll take our Qingqing to check out their appearances. If Qingqing nods, quickly arrange it!"

Mrs. Lin's almost commanding tone left Matchmaker Sun a bit uncomfortable.

She thought to herself: What kind of luck did the Old Mu Family have? Except for the third branch, none of them are good, yet the third branch went out on its own long ago.

Sigh, hopefully, the heavens will soon take back the little fortune given to the Old Mu Family and let that damn old lady experience what it's like to fall from grace. Then, she'll be the first to add insult to injury.

...

...

Mu Shuangshuang returned to her yard, and soon after she had rested, Lu Yuanfeng came back from town.

He was sweaty, not to mention filthy.

But the cart full of fish was fine.

Mu Shuangshuang couldn't help but ask curiously, "Fengzi, were you out catching fish? How did you end up covered in mud?"

"No, Shuangshuang, on my way here, I came across someone pitiful who'd been hit in the leg, and the person who hit him refused to pay for medical expenses, so..."

"So you beat that person up?" Mu Shuangshuang raised an eyebrow, her face full of curiosity.

"Yes! I did hit him, but not too hard! Though there's one thing I can't figure out: why was that person constantly claiming innocence? I wanted to ask more, but I had so many fish to carry, so I came back!"

Lu Yuanfeng spoke with a puzzled expression.

The incident had stuck in his mind, and without resolving it, he couldn't seem to get anything done.

"So Fengzi, tell me what the situation with the old man and the young man was," Mu Shuangshuang said, eager to dive into unraveling the mystery as it had been a while since she'd done such analytical work.

"The old man was about fifty, short and thin, wearing tattered clothes. You'd think he was a homeless person. But even so, when you're hit, there should be compensation!"

"As for the young man, he seemed honest and straightforward, but everyone said he hit the old man..."

As Lu Yuanfeng spoke, he began to doubt himself.

Upon hearing this, Mu Shuangshuang had a vague suspicion that it might be something akin to modern-day extortion, but she needed more clarity and decided a firsthand look was necessary.

"Alright then, Fengzi, let's go over now and see if that old man is still there. If he is, we'll take him to see Grandpa Zhang; if not, we'll stake out the day after tomorrow!"

If it really was an extortion scheme, they might still encounter it. If not, then the matter could be considered closed.

Mu Shuangshuang's suggestion gained Lu Yuanfeng's approval, and he nodded, saying, "First, I'll tie up the ox!"

Chapter 600: Daring to Deceive the Great Aunt (Part 2)

When Lu Yuanfeng tied up the cow, Mu Shuangshuang handed the fish to Yu Si Niang to look after.

The two hurriedly rushed to the place Lu Yuanfeng mentioned.

And indeed, that place was quite far from Er Gui Village, nearly eight or nine miles away, but it was indeed a crossroads.

Leading to several villages.

The people from those villages must pass through here to go to the town.

Lu Yuanfeng was walking a bit hastily, anxious to verify the situation.

Mu Shuangshuang understood him and tried her best to keep pace with him. Normally, it took more than half an hour, but it took less than the time of three sticks of incense.

Lu Yuanfeng pointed at the place already within reach and said, "Shuangshuang, that's it!"

And indeed, there were a few people gathered there, quite lively.

It seemed there was still a quarrel going on; when Lu Yuanfeng rushed up, it was the same scene, the same old man, but the young man had changed.

It was still someone Lu Yuanfeng was very familiar with.

"Da Lang, why are you here?" Lu Yuanfeng asked Mu Dalang.

Mu Dalang was pulling a cart, with two goats on it, both dairy goats.

He bought these to send to Huang Family Village to help Huang Bitu nourish her health; the Huang Family was not doing well, lacking things like meat and fish, and it was inconvenient to leave Huang Family Village.

But Mu Dalang hadn't expected to be falsely accused halfway.

He clearly hadn't bumped into anyone, yet all of a sudden, an old man appeared, clutching his leg, howling about it being broken, and then someone demanded compensation.

"Fengzi, please save me, I didn't hit anyone, this person himself ran under my cart wheel," Mu Dalang hurriedly explained, pointing at the person still clutching their leg, lying on the ground.

In the crowd, people were still yelling for compensation, demanding it fiercely.

"Since you know each other, then pay together!" someone in the crowd said.

"Exactly, so young but doing such disgraceful things, wonder how their parents taught them!"

"Apologize, compensate..."

The people gathered were increasingly aggressive, as if wanting to fight Lu Yuanfeng.

Now Lu Yuanfeng understood the helplessness of false accusation.

"Earlier, you used the same method to deceive money from a young man, now you're trying to do the same to us?" Lu Yuanfeng stated.

The old man was momentarily stunned, then recognized Lu Yuanfeng, but wasn't anxious, continuing to clutch his leg, lamenting.

Those surrounding became increasingly agitated, as if Lu Yuanfeng and Mu Dalang had committed some ultimate crime, with some even wanting to drag them to the government, locking them up for life.

The old man on the ground lamented, suddenly noticing not far away, behind the crowd's feet, a piece of snow-white silver.

Seeing the commotion, the old man quietly went to pick up the silver.

But just as he was about to grab it, the silver moved.

The old man found it strange, but the allure of the silver was too strong; previously crawling, now walking, trying hard to catch it only for it to slip away again.

He didn't notice that he was already fifty meters from the crowd.

Mu Shuangshuang saw the timing was right, stood up from the grass, and the piece of silver followed her movement back into her hand.

"What are you yelling for? The main event is over!" Mu Shuangshuang shouted.

Finally, the crowd turned around.

One by one, they stared dumbfoundedly at the person previously clutching their leg, claiming it was broken.

"Folks, do you see? This is what they call a broken leg, it's extortion!"

As Mu Shuangshuang spoke, the crowd began to switch targets, cursing the standing old man.

Even Mu Shuangshuang had to admire, their ability to change faces was faster than turning pages.

The old man, seeing his scheme exposed, attempted to flee.

Mu Shuangshuang swiftly noticed, reaching out as the old man fell heavily to the ground, muttering curses at Mu Shuangshuang.

"Fengzi, quickly grab him, he's a conman!"

Mu Shuangshuang's words had just fallen when two young men in the crowd rushed forward, fists tightly aimed at Mu Shuangshuang.

Mu Shuangshuang dodged, delivered a spinning kick to one, while Lu Yuanfeng knocked out the other with a punch.

Standing on one of the men, Mu Shuangshuang harshly questioned, "How long have you been doing this here?"

Mu Shuangshuang's question was actually one she knew already, even though she and Fengzi had gone to the town a few days ago, never encountering these people.

They must have arrived recently.

But she wanted the man to answer.

The man was stubborn at first but gave in when Mu Shuangshuang increased the pressure on his head.

"Stop hitting me, I'll say it, I'll say... we're from nearby villages, with no land, and just wanted to make some money to eat, please, spare me!"

"Hmph, is that the truth, no lies?" Mu Shuangshuang raised an eyebrow, her grip tightening a bit more.

"I'm speaking the truth..."

Just as he finished speaking, Mu Shuangshuang stomped on the man's chest, loudly berating.

"How dare you lie to me, with your accent you're not from Qingshan Town at all!"

In a big city, distinguishing accents can be tough, but here, it was all rural folk, unique local accents were identifiable.

Clearly, these three men were outsiders, thinking they could fool her, dream on!

Mu Dalang watched, stunned.

At this moment, he felt Shuangshuang and Fengzi were a perfect match, especially Shuangshuang, the surprises she brought were overwhelming.

His cousin wasn't simple!

"I'll say... we fled here from the border area, there's going to be war again, so my brother and I brought our father to escape, not wanting to be drafted as soldiers!"

The man said, sobbing.

"Border area? Which border?"

Lu Yuanfeng was aware of the border situations,

even knowing there were several border areas, remembering when the leader said there wouldn't be any wars for at least ten years, and it had only been a few months since then, more war?

"Xing City!" the man replied.

Now, it was Lu Yuanfeng's turn to gasp.

Xing City was where his camp was located, the leader was there, war was unlikely.

Lu Yuanfeng instantly realized it was another lie, exchanging glances with Mu Shuangshuang, this time she was truly furious.

Good grief, deceiving her twice, do they think she's a pushover?

"Brother Da Lang, step on his chest, if he dares to move, cripple him! I must show them my strength today!"

Mu Shuangshuang grabbed a stick, harshly hitting another young man twice, saying, "You lied twice to me, two hits for your brother, from now on you utter a single lie, I'll keep beating him until his butt is unrecognizable!"