

Folly 621

Chapter 621: Completely Hopeless (Third Update)

Mr. Mu strode confidently towards the third branch's fields.

As soon as he left, the few people who were still working threw down their sickles, plopped down onto the freshly harvested straw, and exclaimed how tired they were.

"So tired, so tired, this work is really inhuman. At this rate, I'm going to lose another circle of weight..." Mu Dazhong touched the fat on his belly and said.

"Daddy Gou Dan, you take a rest quickly. You're the pillar of our family, you can't collapse."

Mrs. Lin, looking anxious, leaned in to touch Mu Dazhong's face, but he waved her away in disgust.

"Enough, there are so many people here, stay in your place, don't come over!"

It's not entirely Mu Dazhong's fault. The main issue was Mrs. Lin's appearance, which was truly unbearable.

After sleeping for several days without bathing or washing her hair, and most importantly, not brushing her teeth in the morning, a bad breath wafted over when she spoke, which Mu Dazhong couldn't stand.

Right now, he remembered what his mother said, exhausted with Mrs. Lin, he could find a young and beautiful wife.

"Don't come over if you don't want me to, what's the big deal, don't come begging me later." Mrs. Lin answered in a huff but continued to glance over at Mu Dazhong.

Mu Danian slowed his mud-playing movements, looked up, and asked the others.

"Why hasn't Eldest Brother returned yet? When will the days when he leads us to make a fortune come? The opportunity is already cold, and there's no sign of him."

Truth be told, everyone's thoughts were similar. They just wanted Mu Dade to quickly get an official position, so that the rest of the Old Mu Family could follow him to the county.

Nobody wanted to spend their whole life dealing with the fields and being a country bumpkin.

"Eldest Sister-in-law is not here, so of course, we should ask Little Dan and Little Ying about this." Having said that, Mu Dazhong glanced at the ridge to see the two girls from the first branch of the Mu Family, each holding an oil-paper umbrella, seemingly afraid of getting sunburned.

"I say, Little Dan, Little Ying, why are you wrapped up like rice dumplings? The October sun isn't scorching, are you still trying to keep yourselves fair and tender to enjoy life with Eldest Brother?" Mu Dazhong laughed and asked.

Mu Dandan rolled her eyes at Mu Dazhong without speaking.

Mu Yingying, prone to impulsiveness and not fond of this second uncle, retorted: "Second Uncle, this is between my sister and me. It's none of your business. If you don't like it, you don't have to look."

"Oh, you little girl, how dare you talk like that? I'm your second uncle, your elder! With that attitude, what use will you be in the future?"

Mu Yingying had never been spoken to like this before, and now she felt extremely wronged, with tears welling up in her eyes.

Mu Dazhong persisted aggressively: "Cry, cry, all you know is to cry. You're not young anymore, why do you love crying so much? No idea how Eldest Brother and Sister-in-law taught you, such nonsense."

"What does it matter to you? I don't eat your rice, and I'm not from your second branch, so what right do you have to talk about me?" Mu Yingying's tears fell down.

"You stinky girl, how dare you talk back, I'll beat you to death!" Mu Dazhong jumped up, intending to hit Mu Yingying.

"Second Uncle, show some respect. Yingying and I are both daughters of a scholar. Do you really think we're so easy to hit? If you don't want us to tell our parents, you'd better not touch us!" Mu Dandan stood protectively in front, shouting at Mu Dazhong.

"You're threatening me?"

Mu Dazhong realized that these two nieces were not easy to deal with, especially Little Dan, who was older and had more ideas.

The most important thing was, this girl knew his weakness.

"It's not a threat, it's advice. Second Uncle, don't think just because our parents aren't around, you can hit or scold us at will.

We're not like some branch's kids, who, after being beaten, can only swallow their grievances and pretend nothing happened!"

Mu Dandan was alluding to none other than the incident where the fourth branch's son, Mu Xiaochu, was slapped by Mrs. Lin.

But that was something that happened several days ago, which Mu Dandan had witnessed.

She thought the fourth branch would hold Mrs. Lin accountable, but who knew, with one apology from Mrs. Lin, the matter was considered resolved.

This incident still disgusted Mu Dandan, so she brought it up separately.

"Little Dan, you sure have a big mouth. Old Four doesn't even care about that anymore, what are you making a fuss about?" Mrs. Lin rolled her eyes and scolded.

"Exactly, a junior arguing with elders, pity your grandma isn't here, otherwise, she'd rip your mouth apart!"

Mu Dazhong and Mrs. Lin sang in harmony, making Mu Dandan furious, so she simply took Mu Yingying to rest elsewhere.

Mu Dajiang's face was not looking good, especially when the matters discussed by the second and first branches involved the fourth branch.

He stopped his work, glanced from afar at Mu Shuangshuang and Yu Si Niang working in the third branch, his face full of envy.

The current life of the third branch is really worth envying for the fourth branch! They have everything, no worries about food and clothing, and no fear of their parents' beatings and scoldings.

Especially this work, his father even went to the third branch to learn some skills, making Mu Dajiang more envious.

The third branch has finally risen to the top!

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Mu Shuangshuang was harvesting rice near the slope when suddenly a shadow blocked the sunlight in front of her. She looked up to see Mr. Mu staring at her harvesting rice.

Mu Shuangshuang immediately felt a wave of frustration.

What is this old man up to again?

"Grandpa, what are you doing?" Mu Shuangshuang asked.

Yu Si Niang, who was in front, also stopped her work and walked over, seemingly curious about Mr. Mu's purpose as well.

"Si Niang, Shuangshuang, I saw you two harvesting rice over there, and your speed is extremely fast. It's not worse at all compared to when Old Third used to work."

Mr. Mu proactively praised the third branch.

Yu Si Niang appeared flattered, having received praise from her father-in-law in the Old Mu Family for as many times as she could count on her fingers over the years.

"Grandpa, you're right, my mother and I, one person is almost as productive as two."

Mu Shuangshuang was not boasting; indeed, the two of them worked very fast.

However, Fengzi wasn't bad either, carrying as much rice as two people by himself, there wasn't much left.

Mr. Mu chuckled and nodded in agreement.

"You work so fast, do you have any secrets? Teach me, this old man, so I can go back and supervise the others in the family to work."

As soon as Mr. Mu spoke, Mu Shuangshuang suddenly realized.

So he came to cure the laziness plague in the Old Mu Family.

But the Old Mu Family bunch were already in the terminal stage, was there any hope?

There was absolutely no hope!

"Dad, we don't have any secrets for working; I have long practiced speed by working as an assistant chef outside.

As for Shuangshuang, I guess it relates to working fast with Shuangshuang's father." Yu Si Niang looked troubled.

"Old Third's wife, don't play games with an old man like me. If there really are no secrets, why is it that you work faster than others?"

Mr. Mu looked full of disbelief, thinking Yu Si Niang was unwilling to teach him.

Chapter 622: Shuangshuang Cures Laziness (Fourth Update)

"Dad, I really don't have any secret techniques, if you don't believe me, ask Shuangshuang how she works!"

Yu Si Niang was also at her wit's end. When it comes to working, either you're naturally faster, or you practice a lot.

What kind of secret technique could there be?

"Grandpa, what my mom said is true, we're not lying to you!"

Mu Shuangshuang felt that Mr. Mu was just grasping at straws in desperation. Having farmed all his life, as long as you don't slack off, how slow can you really work?

"That's not okay, Si Niang, you come with me to that side and make a demonstration, let those brats see how others work."

Mr. Mu insisted on taking Yu Si Niang over, actually to give himself a way out.

Since he came, if he couldn't get even one daughter-in-law to help, wouldn't he lose face?

Yu Si Niang said, "But I haven't finished my work here yet."

Mr. Mu was getting a bit impatient. Even calling a daughter-in-law seemed to be an effort.

"I told you to go, so go! What's with all the fuss? There's a big family waiting to see!" urged Mr. Mu.

This finally provoked Mu Shuangshuang.

Mu Shuangshuang grasped the sickle tightly in her hand, her expression not pleasant.

"Grandpa, it's not Shuangshuang saying this, but my uncles and cousins, it's not that they don't know how to work, they just don't want to work.

No matter how sharp the axe, if you don't swing it, it's just a heap of scrap iron after a while.

Rather than seeking out some secret technique, it's better to practice well and not be lazy."

Mu Shuangshuang actually didn't want to say this because it's an old and tired topic.

When the third branch split off, the double harvest of the Old Mu Family just stopped there, unfinished for a long time.

Mr. Mu didn't learn his lesson but wanted to find shortcuts instead.

He's really muddleheaded!

Being hit where it hurts, Mr. Mu sighed deeply, feeling somehow upset.

The little old man stood in the field, suddenly looking much older.

Mu Shuangshuang did not pity him. As the saying goes, "The wicked will be ground by the wicked."

Mr. Mu usually indulged his sons' laziness, and now it turns out like this, serves him right!

"Grandpa, if there's nothing else, my mom and I will get back to work!" Mu Shuangshuang finished speaking and buried herself in her work.

She grabbed a handful of rice stalks in one hand and a sickle in the other, cutting it down before Mr. Mu could even react.

That speed was unmatched, even compared to Mr. Mu's decades of farming.

Mr. Mu watched in surprise, and in no time, a whole row of rice was cut down.

She noticed that Shuangshuang didn't rest during the process, didn't drink water, and didn't shout out in fatigue like the other members of the Old Mu Family.

Mr. Mu suddenly felt extremely envious. How great it would be if this granddaughter were still his, the farm work would be finished quickly.

"Shuangshuang, come with me for a walk, help grandpa cure your uncle's laziness, and I'll give your third branch twenty pounds of shelled cotton."

Twenty pounds of shelled cotton was quite a sum for a farm family.

It's just enough for each person in the third branch to get a new cotton jacket, and with two kids, there would definitely be some left over.

She could even buy some more cotton to make one for Fengzi and Yuanbao.

Such a good deal, Mu Shuangshuang didn't even hesitate to nod.

"Grandpa, I'll go for this task. But you know the temper of my uncles and cousins, they might not listen to Shuangshuang!"

Mr. Mu also thought of this, knowing that his sons were proud and arrogant, typical cases of being ambitious but incompetent.

The girl surely couldn't command them.

"This is how it will be: today's work is yours to assign. Anyone who doesn't treat you well, you can make him work alone, or even skip lunch and dinner. I'll back you up!"

This was probably the only sensible thing Mr. Mu had said.

However, in Mu Shuangshuang's view, it was also for the sake of those fields of the Old Mu Family.

Going further, it was for Mu Dade.

The harvest here, according to the usual routine, apart from taxes and family consumption, all the rest was sold to fund Mu Dade's studies.

Now that Mu Dade had passed the imperial exam, although there were court subsidies and some grains.

But once blood is sucked dry, it's hard to let go.

Mu Shuangshuang, carrying her sickle, followed Mr. Mu to the Old Mu Family's fields.

It was better not to look, but upon arrival, there was not a single person working.

They were all playing in the fields, even the most honest Mu Dajiang stood there holding his sickle.

After almost an hour, not even a portion of the Old Mu Family's land was harvested.

Not to mention Mr. Mu being furious, even Mu Shuangshuang was half scared to death.

If this went on, it's not just the Old Mu Family having problems with the third branch, but with such an attitude, they'd all starve eventually.

"Dad, why did you bring the girl over? Is she here to do the work for our family?" Mu Dazhong approached, looking excited.

Everyone was surprised, expecting Yu Si Niang to come, but it was Mu Shuangshuang instead.

"Second Son, what are you talking about? Shuangshuang is here to teach you all how to work. Pay attention, if you don't learn, you won't eat today!" Mr. Mu said.

Upon hearing that she wasn't here to help, everyone deflated like punctured balls.

"Dad, you're kidding, how can the girl's work compare to the third sister-in-law, she's famously fast!" Mu Dazhong said.

"Alright, stop jabbering, watch Shuangshuang's demonstration!"

Mu Shuangshuang gripped the sickle tightly and cast a sweeping glance at everyone.

"Uncles, aunts, sisters, and brothers, Shuangshuang asks all of you to find a patch of field, pick up your sickles."

This request from Mu Shuangshuang was actually devoid of any real intent because she knew the Old Mu Family would hardly listen.

Sure enough, apart from the fourth branch's Mu Dajiang and Mu Xiaxia, no one paid attention to Mu Shuangshuang.

Mu Shuangshuang worked at the previous speed and cut through a patch of the Old Mu Family's field, then laid down her sickle.

"Today we'll harvest the rice using the previous incentive system, whoever finishes first can go home first.

And today's meals aren't divided; the first to finish work can eat first, meaning food portions aren't controlled.

Of course, those who don't work, don't eat!"

Mu Shuangshuang used a tactic previously employed. The reason for the Old Mu Family's laziness was communal meals.

Everything was done together, but the rewards were shared equally.

Like, everyone works, you work the hardest, you're the fastest, but you always get the same as everyone else.

As time goes on, you become like everyone else, thinking of slacking off to play.

Just like the fourth branch.

When the third branch was around, at least there was someone to compare misery, now that they're no longer there, even the fourth branch is starting to get assimilated.

At least when Mu Shuangshuang came, the fourth branch was also slacking off.

"Girl, since when do you have the right to decide the affairs of our family? Dividing meals and dishes is your grandma's responsibility, what right do you have to decide?" Mrs. Lin said bluntly.

"Grandpa, explain it to my second aunt, she doesn't want to work!"

Chapter 623: The Old Man Wants to Regret (Part 1)

"Second daughter-in-law, now that you're here, work well. The fields aren't a place for you to slack off.

You all listen to me, today's matters in the fields are assigned by Shuang. Whoever she says should work, must work, or else you'll have no food!"

Mr. Mu quietly scolded Mrs. Lin while also announcing Mu Shuangshuang's status to everyone.

The rest of the Old Mu Family had their jaws practically drop.

It wasn't just because Mr. Mu gave up his power, but because the person he gave power to was none other than the daughter from the third branch who had already separated.

"Dad, have you gone senile? She's from the third branch." Mu Dazhong said to Mr. Mu.

"You're talking nonsense! What's wrong with the third branch? Doesn't the third branch have the Mu surname? I'm the one in charge of the Old Mu Family, and whoever I want to manage can manage!"

Mr. Mu nearly shouted these words.

After speaking, Mu Dazhong and Mu Danian exchanged looks.

None of them were willing to accept Mu Shuangshuang, but since the old man had spoken, what could they do?

They could only continue to slack off.

Everyone made up their minds, and after Mu Shuangshuang finished allocating the land, they still stood firmly in place.

Mu Shuangshuang was not in a hurry to chase them but instead walked over to the fourth branch's Mu Dajiang and Mu Xiaxia.

"Fourth uncle, you should start working. Today's work in the fields is arranged by Shuang. Whoever finishes first gets to rest first.

And if these tasks aren't completed, they'll have to continue tomorrow. Once you finish your work, you can rest!"

Starting with the fourth branch was Mu Shuangshuang's strategy.

She needed to separate the most diligent ones from the Old Mu Family gang.

So that these people wouldn't keep slacking off, relying on honest folks to help finish the work and clean up messes.

Mu Dajiang froze for a moment, seeing no hint of a joke on Shuang's face, he picked up his sickle and started swinging it quickly.

Actually, Mu Shuangshuang's set task wasn't heavy. At least for her, it was easy to complete, but for the Old Mu Family, it was like an astronomical figure.

Being lazy has set in; everything feels hard and tiring.

Unless this idleness is eradicated, the Old Mu Family will stay as they are, always stagnant.

The rest of the Old Mu Family branches were leisurely working in the fields, and when Mr. Mu saw Mu Shuangshuang arrive, there was no effect.

For a moment, he found it hard to accept.

Several times, he wanted Mu Shuangshuang to take charge, but he hadn't yet moved before Mr. Mu wanted to see what would happen next.

After the time of a single incense stick, Mu Dajiang and Mu Xiaxia had cut quite a few stalks of rice.

"Fourth uncle, keep it up! If you complete today's task first, the Old Mu Family won't make your branch do lunch, wash dishes, or do the laundry!"

With Mrs. Liu from the fourth branch away, there's no one to wash clothes for the Old Mu Family, nor wash the dishes.

According to Mrs. Mu's past temperament, she would definitely make the fourth branch do it.

Now that Mr. Mu has relinquished power, she simply uses her authority once to give the fourth branch a relief.

Mu Dajiang's pace accelerated, and in half an hour, he and Mu Xiangxiang finished the work that was supposed to take the whole morning.

During this time, Mu Dajiang didn't drink a drop of water or wipe a drop of sweat.

"Dad, Xiaxia and I have finished our work. Can we go now?" The man looked expectantly at Mr. Mu.

Mr. Mu's first reaction was to make the fourth branch continue working.

Because the speed of the fourth branch was so fast, it equaled the amount done by the other lazy ones in the Old Mu Family in a day.

"Fourth, you've finished all this work, proving that the fourth branch is truly capable.

But look, we still have so much land at home..."

Before Mr. Mu could finish speaking, Mu Dajiang's face turned pale.

He felt like he'd been played.

Why should he clean up after others when he had finished his work?

Mu Shuangshuang was beside herself, speechless with Mr. Mu's shamelessness.

No wonder even the fourth branch was slacking off. Finish your work and have to clean up after others? That doesn't sit well with anyone.

Especially since Mr. Mu earlier said he was giving her the authority.

This wasn't putting her in a bad spot!

"Grandpa, you already said that this matter is entrusted to Shuang. Shuang has already spoken to fourth uncle that if they finish today's morning task first—

they can rest and won't have to wash clothes or wash dishes. If you act like this now, who would dare continue with the tasks later?"

Mr. Mu's face turned alternately green and white from being chastised.

This was indeed somewhat dishonest, and added to the feeling of burning bridges.

"Fourth, go back and rest. If your mom says anything, just tell her the old man said so. I'm the boss of this house!"

Finally, Mr. Mu showed some conscience, knowing there's a relentless old tigress at home.

Mu Dajiang was full of excitement, nearly an hour before noon.

In the past, he had to work till noon, only being allowed to leave after the others had left.

This time, he finally could be the first to leave, and with justifiable reason.

Mu Dazhong, resting nearby, couldn't believe it and muttered, "Dad, you're really letting the fourth leave? Think it over, if he leaves, there's no one to do the work."

"Exactly, Dad, you should ask fourth brother to stay and work for us. If he works at this speed, with several acres, he alone will suffice.

After all, fourth brother has worked in the mud all his life, so what's he doing once more? Once we finish this sowing and harvest, we can move to the county."

Mu Danian smacked his lips, calculating.

But this shamelessness, who knows who they inherited it from.

Mu Shuangshuang looked at the sky, speechless.

"Second uncle, Fifth uncle, if you want to rest, finish your own work yourselves.

Otherwise, you stay here and work; if not finished today, then tomorrow.

From now on, Grandpa will give you tasks every day, even if at the end, you haven't cut even a patch of ground, it's okay.

Whenever you finish the rice harvest, that's when you follow my uncle to the county.

Take your time with the work, you have a lifetime to cut these few acres, go slow.

It'll just save my uncle a few beds and food!"

Mu Shuangshuang was definitely not joking with the other branches; if it were her, she could surely deal with these oddities of the Old Mu Family.

As long as Mr. Mu listened to her.

But what she agreed to help with was only for today; who is diligent and who is lazy isn't her concern.

These words of Mu Shuangshuang still held some intimidation for a few people from the Old Mu Family, especially when Mu Dajiang left the field edge and headed home.

Mu Dazhong and Mrs. Lin exchanged opinions.

"Daddy Gou Dan, what should we do? Work or not?" Mrs. Lin was most worried about staying in the countryside working as a peasant.

"How should I know? This matter, we better see what Fifth does, he's full of ideas."

Chapter 624: Like Pulling Scallions (Second Update)

Mu Dazhong refused to work unless Mu Danian started working first.

But Mu Danian was waiting with evidence against the eldest branch, no one dared to throw him out!

"Daddy Gou Dan, Fifth isn't working, should we?" Mrs. Lin asked again.

Mu Dazhong gritted his teeth, hesitated a moment, then irritably said: "Work, if he doesn't work, we will. No more talking about it. The ones who finish first can eat first, we can eat up all the food Mother prepared and starve that bastard!"

When Mu Dazhong finished speaking, he began to work.

After all, he's been alive for so many years, he knows clearly when to yield.

Especially at times like this when the Old Mu Family is still unstable.

The others saw Mu Dazhong had started working and quickly followed suit.

Initially, Mu Daniaan was unwilling too, but seeing even the usually lazy Mu Dazhong, who would use the excuse of going to the toilet to slack off, getting to work seriously.

Feeling uneasy, he picked up a sickle from the ground and started working alongside the others.

Only Mu Xiangxiang and the two girls from the eldest branch continued playing by the field's edge.

Mu Shuangshuang didn't go up to reprimand them, knowing they'd be punished later as an example for the monkeys, those who don't work.

Soon, it was midday, and the second branch finished their work and left happily.

Mu Daniaan still had a bit left, but didn't want to finish it, intending to sneak away with the second branch. However, Mu Shuangshuang stopped him.

"Uncle, your work isn't finished yet, where are you going?"

Mu Daniaan rudely replied: "What business is it of yours, you brat, don't meddle in my affairs!"

Mu Daniaan followed the second branch up the field slope.

The second branch was naturally unwilling.

"Dad, I just had a miscarriage and finished all the work, why can Fifth leave without finishing his?" Mrs. Lin pointed at Mu Danian.

"Let the beast leave and see if I give him lunch today. You second branch go back and eat without worrying about him!" Mr. Mu frowned, displeased with Mu Danian's behavior.

"Dad, I'm just hungry, can I eat and then come back to finish?" Mu Danian pleaded with Mr. Mu.

In the past, Mr. Mu would have agreed, but the situation was different now.

If the Old Mu Family continued like this, none of them would work.

"Eat, eat, eat, all you know is eat. Besides eating, what else do you know? You've shamed the face of the Old Mu Family.

Go home and look, what kind of woman have you hidden in the house? If people find out, who would dare marry you?"

Mr. Mu was so angry he could spit blood, squeezing the sickle in his hand tightly, tendons bulging, a sign of impending rage.

But Mu Danian was oblivious, having used such tricks often and getting away with it every time.

Mu Danian climbed up the field bank, just about to move forward when a whirlwind hit.

Pain shot through his back, as Mr. Mu kicked him.

Mu Danian rolled down the slope, head towards the ground, legs up in the air, diving straight into someone else's paddy field.

Mr. Mu rushed up, pulled Mu Danian out of the field like pulling out a scallion, and then started punching him relentlessly.

"You dare slack off, you refuse to work, how did my Old Mu Family produce something like you."

"Look at your third brother, look at your fourth brother, none of them are as lazy as you, being asked to do a bit of work feels like they're asking for your life."

"Why don't you just die from laziness, suffocate from a urinal, or drown from drinking water?"

Mr. Mu beat and scolded, full of grievances and anger, all vented on Mu Danian.

Under his fist, Mu Danian cried and wailed, begging and pleading.

But Mr. Mu turned a deaf ear.

This time, Mr. Mu was truly angry, otherwise, he wouldn't have cursed so harshly.

In Mr. Mu's eyes, other families are harmonious.

No matter how lazy, during the harvest and autumn pause, they wouldn't slack off.

They hurried to get all their harvest home.

Sort everything out at home.

But his sons feared doing even a little more work.

Fear that the work they do would benefit someone else.

Always thinking only of themselves, if they have enough to eat, if they're having enough fun.

Whenever there are benefits, they flock together.

As Mr. Mu beat Mu Danian, his heart ached badly.

His back, already curved from years of farm work, now hunched even more.

Mu Shuangshuang watched the commotion, didn't step forward to intervene.

Because she knew Mr. Mu was doing the right thing.

If this wasn't addressed now, sooner or later they'd commit a serious mistake.

All bad habits start small, from minor matters.

To prosper, laziness must be eliminated.

Mr. Mu was tired of kicking, Mu Danian cried out from exhaustion.

He quietly went to the field bank and finished the work he neglected.

Mu Xiangxiang and the two girls from the eldest branch watched each other, frightened.

In their memories, Mr. Mu rarely got physical.

The one who liked to get physical was Old Mrs. Mu.

"Sis, should we still work?" Mu Yingying nudged Mu Dandan's arm.

"Why work, it's noon, I'm hungry, let's go back," Mu Dandan said.

Mu Dandan was certain Mr. Mu wouldn't dare hit them, as they were daughters of a scholar, they shouldn't be doing farm work in such a place.

"Should we go back?" Mu Yingying was still fearful.

"Of course!"

Finished speaking, the two girls climbed up the field bank, followed by Mu Xiangxiang, trotting back home.

No one cared about Mr. Mu huffing and puffing on the field bank, nor did anyone offer to help the little old man up.

Mu Shuangshuang suddenly found Mr. Mu's life truly pathetic.

On the surface, his sons all listened to him, but when it came to work and personal benefits, they pushed each other around!

"Grandpa, Shuangshuang will help you up!"

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When Mu Shuangshuang returned to the Old Mu Family, she had barely warmed her seat when Mr. Mu had Mu Xiaxia send over a bag of cotton.

After being criticized by Mu Shuangshuang last time, Mu Xiaxia had restrained herself quite a bit.

At least, she was less openly hostile towards Mu Shuangshuang.

"Sister Shuangshuang, grandpa said you can go or not in the afternoon, anyway the cotton is for you!"

Mr. Mu's meaning was clear, Mu Shuangshuang gave him advice, he would follow this method to discipline the people of the Old Mu Family.

Giving a man a fish is not as good as teaching him to fish!

Since Shuangshuang had given good advice, whether she came or not, to Mr. Mu, was no longer that important.

"Alright!"

Taking the bag, Mu Shuangshuang checked it, it was this year's newly harvested cotton.

But the color was not pure white, the cotton inside the bag had a slight yellowish tinge, likely cotton that had been rained on.

Indeed, Mr. Mu wasn't any different from the rest.

Chapter 625: Stingy Nature (Three More)

Mu Shuangshuang estimated in her heart that although Mr. Mu agreed to give cotton, he likely wouldn't part with the good quality stuff.

So he brought over this lower quality cotton to make up the numbers.

This old geezer, so stingy!

However, Mu Shuangshuang wasn't hoping for much, getting anything from Mr. Mu is not easy.

Besides, this time, twenty pounds of cotton is worth quite a bit!

In the Da Ning Dynasty, the most expensive things were food and cotton—one for eating, the other for clothing.

The cotton obtained from the Old Mu Family is not just simple cotton. The cotton-made clothes could save a lot of money for the third branch and Fengzi.

Mu Shuangshuang had it weighed; it was twenty pounds.

She emptied the sack and gave it to Mu Xiaxia.

As Mu Xiaxia was about to leave, she suddenly stopped and, in a very small voice, said to Mu Shuangshuang, "Sister Shuangshuang, I'm sorry, I was immature in the past."

Mu Shuangshuang was slightly surprised, upon looking, Mu Xiaxia indeed seemed to have matured quite a bit.

After all, she was just jealous that the third branch suddenly became better off when they originally struggled together with the fourth branch.

It's understandable.

Everyone can share in hardship, but definitely not in happiness.

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In the kitchen, Yu Si Niang was cooking while Lu Yuanfeng helped with the fire.

The tall young man was busy moving in and out of the small kitchen, somewhat awkwardly.

Yet a smile always hung on Lu Yuanfeng's face.

In between stir-frying, Yu Si Niang suddenly said to Lu Yuanfeng, "Fengzi, spend this New Year at our place, let's have fun together."

Yu Si Niang had been looking forward to New Year for a long time.

Because on New Year's Day, Old Mrs. Mu wouldn't scold the daughters-in-law, and any work could be postponed to the next day without anyone complaining.

Even though you'd be busy all day in the kitchen without a breather.

But now Yu Si Niang was even more looking forward to New Year.

Because this is the first year after the third branch split off, everything at home can be decided by themselves, including fireworks that they rarely saw before—they could indulge in them this time.

Just thinking about it made Yu Si Niang feel delighted.

Lu Yuanfeng added a handful of firewood and after controlling the heat well, he nodded.

"Thank you, Third Aunt!"

Getting a positive answer, Yu Si Niang was even more pleased.

Mu Shuangshuang packed the cotton in her family's sack and hid it in her own room.

When she went back to the kitchen to help, she happened to hear this topic.

She leaned over curiously and asked, "Mom, what do we need to prepare for New Year? Is there anything we need to pay attention to?"

Regarding the New Year, Mu Shuangshuang was probably the most excited.

She hadn't been in this era for a year yet and hadn't experienced a traditional New Year.

But she always knew that the ancient New Year had much more flavor than the modern one's.

A lot of customs to follow.

"You're not young anymore, how are you still like a child.

It's still early, it's only October now, there's two months left till New Year, when the time comes, I'll explain it all to you!"

Yu Si Niang looked at her daughter with a face full of love.

"Mom, I'm not young anymore, Fengzi and I are planning to pick a time in the twelfth lunar month to settle the marriage, what do you think?" Mu Shuangshuang asked.

Yu Si Niang's face broke into a grin that couldn't close.

"Silly child, this is a good thing, you don't need to ask dad and mom's permission, dad and mom have long said, as long as it's Fengzi, you can decide to get engaged anytime!"

Yu Si Niang's words not only warmed Mu Shuangshuang's heart but also touched Lu Yuanfeng's heart.

In Lu Yuanfeng's heart, he had nothing, just a few shabby huts.

His mother was missing, his father couldn't be called a father.

And he had a younger brother Yuanbao, for whom he would definitely organize the marriage in the future.

"Thank you, Third Aunt..." Lu Yuanfeng's voice was a bit choked up.

Mu Shuangshuang knew that he was moved by her mother's words.

Yu Si Niang smiled and jokingly said, "Don't just be grateful, when my daughter enters your family, you have to take care of her."

"I won't lose out, do I eat that little?" Mu Shuangshuang yelled from the side.

Lu Yuanfeng laughed too, in his heart, he had long considered Yu Si Niang and Mu Dashan his own parents.

At the Third Branch of the Mu Family, there was harmony, filled with laughter.

But over at the Old Mu Family, it was like an explosion, noisy and tumultuous.

The reason was none other than Mr. Mu not allowing Mu Xiangxiang and the two daughters of the Mu Family's eldest to eat.

Mu Xiangxiang was the type who would throw a tantrum if she didn't eat four or five bowls at a meal.

At this moment, Mu Xiangxiang sat in the yard, her newly changed clothes were smudged with dirt.

The entire yard was a scene of chaos.

"Father Xiangxiang, you know our daughter hasn't done any work since childhood, just let it pass this time, let her do it next time!" Old Mrs. Mu said, watching her daughter roll on the ground, her heart aching.

She took the initiative to plead with Mr. Mu.

"Dad, Dan Dan and Yingying as well, Da De raises these two daughters like treasures, treated like rich ladies, never touching a drop of water from spring, now asking them to harvest grain is indeed forcing them." Mrs. Jin also pleaded for her two daughters.

"A lenient mother raises lazy children, it's because of you, these kids are so lazy, everyone else works, why can they rest?" Mr. Mu's hand tapped heavily against a wooden pillar beside him.

"Old man, our Xiangxiang is their sister, brothers raising sisters is only natural, whoever disagrees, I'll skin them!" Old Mrs. Mu yelled with her hands on her hips.

The crowd watching instantly quieted down.

Old Mrs. Mu protecting Mu Xiangxiang, what could be done.

"So by your logic, parents raising children is also natural, are you going to work in the fields too?" Mr. Mu said in an irritated tone.

Then he spoke again.

"The one in charge of the Old Mu Family is me, whoever thinks they can defy me should roll out of the Old Mu Family, including you and your treasured daughter!

Also, you, eldest daughter-in-law, Dan Dan and Yingying have always done less work compared to other branches, if now they still don't work, what will the other branches think? Our Old Mu Family doesn't support idlers!"

Leaving these harsh words, Mr. Mu went to call Mu Dajiang for a meal.

It was agreed that whoever finishes the work first eats first.

Once the rules are set, they must be followed.

"Old Fourth, eat a bit less later, leave some for our second branch." Mu Dazhong called out anxiously from the side.

Mu Danian watched eagerly but didn't dare step forward.

He wished he knew his dad truly meant it, he wouldn't have slacked off then, anyway the work had to be done.

This was the first time the Old Mu Family ate according to the order of finishing work.

But it also strengthened the determination of others to be the first to finish work in the afternoon.

If anyone had any sense, they wouldn't go against their own stomach!

Chapter 626: Repeat Offender (Part 1)

Mr. Mu was determined today, closely watching as the fourth branch ate first, followed by the second branch, with the fifth last.

Several times in between, Old Mrs. Mu suggested letting Xiangxiang come in to eat, but was rejected each time.

Angry, Old Mrs. Mu stopped eating and headed straight for the kitchen.

Since her husband wouldn't feed Xiangxiang, she would cook for Xiangxiang herself.

In the courtyard, Old Mrs. Mu comforted Mu Xiangxiang extensively, looking at the filthy Mu Xiangxiang. Not only did she not find her shabby, she felt heartache.

"Dear daughter, let's not cry. Your second sister is missing now; your brother and you are mother's heart and soul. If you don't want to work, you won't work. I'll cook for you separately every day, okay?"

Mu Xiangxiang used her hand to wipe her nose and nodded vigorously.

Old Mrs. Mu's heart ached even more.

"My dear girl, I'll cook for you now. What do you want to eat?" asked Old Mrs. Mu.

"Eggs, mom, I want four eggs!"

Mu Xiangxiang boldly demanded.

If it were someone else, eating so many eggs, Old Mrs. Mu would definitely slap them, making their nose and face swollen.

But this was her favorite daughter. Even if it were forty eggs, Old Mrs. Mu wouldn't feel it was too much.

"Promise me you won't cry anymore, and I'll go find eggs for you."

Old Mrs. Mu used the word "find" because when Mu Dade came home, the only two egg-laying hens were used to nourish him.

Plus for those few days, the eldest was having major and minor supplements every two days; the eggs were gone.

"Thanks, mom, Xiangxiang loves you the most!" Mu Xiangxiang hugged Old Mrs. Mu's face and gave her a smacking kiss.

Old Mrs. Mu's mouth instantly bloomed into a smile.

Encouraged by her daughter's love, Old Mrs. Mu felt like a mother hen ready to win a battle.

She hurried to the third branch of the Mu Family.

She knew the third branch kept their only hen beside the pigsty.

Having a smooth path to the chicken coop, Old Mrs. Mu carefully reached into the third branch's chicken coop and touched two eggs.

Those were eggs laid by the hen over two days, forgotten by Yu Si Niang amidst her busy autumn harvest tasks.

Although not four eggs, two were better than none.

Old Mrs. Mu pocketed the eggs and walked towards the Old Mu Family's side as if nothing had happened.

The people from the third branch were having lunch in the kitchen, with Mu Shuangshuang facing away from the kitchen entrance, while Mu Dashan was the opposite.

So within the third branch, only Mu Dashan saw Old Mrs. Mu's figure and spoke in confusion.

"Huh, isn't that Shuangshuang's grandma? Why is she wandering in our yard?"

Old Mrs. Mu ran quickly, even with bound feet, it did not affect her speed.

Just as Mu Shuangshuang turned around, Old Mrs. Mu disappeared from sight.

"Dad, are you sure you didn't see wrong, was it really my grandma?"

Mu Shuangshuang knew Old Mrs. Mu well, if she came to the third branch, it would either be to scold or cause trouble.

There was no way she would come and leave quietly, there must be something fishy!

"Shuangshuang's father, could it be like Shuangshuang said, you really saw wrong? It's lunchtime, she should be eating over there." Yu Si Niang joined Mu Shuangshuang in agreement.

Both the mother and daughter knew Old Mrs. Mu's nature, it's impossible for her to come quietly.

"Definitely not a mistake. That's definitely Shuangshuang's grandma. Though she was in a hurry, her figure and walking posture were unmistakably hers," Mu Dashan said with certainty.

Mu Shuangshuang furrowed her brows, suddenly she thought of something.

"Mom, is our hen still there?"

Yu Si Niang was startled and rushed towards the pigsty.

Upon seeing the empty chicken coop, Yu Si Niang was overwhelmed.

She hurried back to the kitchen, looking like she was about to cry.

"We're in trouble, our two eggs are gone."

"What? Shuangshuang's mother, what happened, explain slowly," Mu Dashan hurriedly asked.

"I was too busy yesterday, didn't pick eggs from yesterday. Today I went to the fields for harvesting rice, came back at noon, and was busy cooking. I thought I'd pick them when washing dishes later..."

"It's all my fault, I failed to pay attention; now the two eggs are gone."

Two eggs aren't a significant number, only worth one penny.

But for the third branch, they're excellent nutrition for the kids.

Xiao Han and Little Zhi were growing, not possible to have meat every meal, so Mu Shuangshuang asked Yu Si Niang to save up three eggs to make steamed egg pudding for the siblings.

Now that the eggs were gone, everyone's mood was down.

Mu Shuangshuang stood up: "It's definitely my grandma who took them. I was wondering why she would quietly come to our house; turns out she came to steal something. I'm going to find her."

"Shuangshuang, we don't have evidence, can't call your grandma a thief, and... even if you chase her out, she won't admit it's ours," Yu Si Niang stopped Mu Shuangshuang from going out.

"Dad, what do you think?" Mu Shuangshuang directed her gaze at Mu Dashan.

"Shuangshuang, your mom is right, your grandma is the elder, we can't accuse her of being a thief because of two eggs!

Moreover, your mom has been through this. When she first married in, everything was taken by your grandma, leaving only a featherless chicken.

Back then, your mom said she'd use it to nourish herself after you were born, but when your grandma learned, she took the chicken overnight, cooked it into soup for your uncle.

Your mom tried to demand it back, but didn't get it and almost got beaten up..."

Mu Dashan spoke with a hint of choking up.

His wife had been unappreciated from that time.

Mu Shuangshuang didn't know that such an incident revealed such a piece of history.

But it also indicated that Old Mrs. Mu wasn't doing this for the first time; she was a habitual offender.

Even taking things from her daughter-in-law, what a rarity.

But of course, she probably wouldn't see it as theft, but as a son's and daughter's-in-law offering.

Lu Yuanfeng listened silently beside them.

This matter was Shuangshuang's family affair; he shouldn't interfere.

Besides, he was a man; he couldn't manage women's affairs.

But he could devise a plan.

"Shuangshuang, I'll make a chicken coop for you when I get back. Let's buy two more hens. Three hens laying eggs every day, then we won't have to wait for a daily egg.

If we're more careful, this won't happen again. What do you think?" Lu Yuanfeng asked.

Though it was sound, Mu Shuangshuang couldn't swallow down her anger.

"Fengzi, Dad and Mom, you eat first. I'm going to see what my grandma is doing with our eggs!"

"Shuangshuang..." Mu Dashan just opened his mouth when Lu Yuanfeng stopped him.

"Uncle, let Shuangshuang go. With her temperament, she won't be able to bear it if she doesn't see for herself."

Mu Dashan nodded.

His daughter's temperament was indeed unlike his or Si Niang.

"Uncle, I'll go see Shuangshuang. You eat first!"

Lu Yuanfeng stood up, greeted Mu Dashan and Yu Si Niang, then followed Shuangshuang towards the Old Mu Family's direction—

Chapter 627: The Secret of the Slim Aunt (Second Update)

Old Mrs. Mu carried the eggs straight to the kitchen.

She started a fire in the kitchen and poured half a bowl of rapeseed oil into the heated iron wok.

Once the oil was ready, two eggs went into the pan at the same time.

Mu Xiangxiang liked burnt fried eggs, and Old Mrs. Mu was quite adept at making them.

The two eggs, once cooked, were sprinkled with a bit of chopped green onions.

Then she fried two greens with three spoonfuls of lard.

Since Mr. Mu didn't allow the rice to be touched, Old Mrs. Mu made some dough lumps.

A half-pot full of dough lumps was cooked, placed into a bowl resembling a wooden basin, and overturned with the eggs for Mu Xiangxiang.

Only then, Old Mrs. Mu happily went to the courtyard to call Mu Xiangxiang.

When Mu Xiangxiang heard that the meal was ready, she almost ran so fast that her bottom exploded. As she entered the kitchen, a fragrant aroma greeted her.

"Mom, it's the smell of lard, did you add lard for me?"

Looking at the kitchen counter, there was a bowl full of dough lumps, and beside it, greens stir-fried in lard. Mu Xiangxiang was overjoyed.

The gloom of the morning was swept away.

"Yes indeed, Xiangxiang, eat quickly. After you eat, I'll let Old Fourth's wife wash the dishes. That lazy woman will be back this evening."

"Okay!" Mu Xiangxiang nodded heavily.

She couldn't wait and stuffed the still-hot fried egg into her mouth, resulting in a grimace from the burn, which made Old Mrs. Mu feel heartbroken.

"That damn third son's wife, their eggs are always hotter than everyone else's. Wait till this old lady skins her next time!"

Mu Shuangshuang happened to hear this just as she arrived, and she felt quite annoyed.

Stealing eggs from her house was bad enough, now talking bad behind her mom's back.

The old woman was too wicked.

Mu Shuangshuang had initially wanted to rush in immediately, but it seemed unnecessary now. Every time Mu Xiangxiang ate so much, she had to go to the toilet. This time she wanted to see exactly what she was up to.

Mu Shuangshuang hid in the dark.

The people in the kitchen couldn't see her, but she could see inside.

Mu Xiangxiang opened her mouth wide, like a machine, constantly stuffing things into it, saying how good it tasted while eating.

Mu Shuangshuang really thought Mu Xiangxiang reincarnated from a starving ghost, eating like this, it would take a golden or silver mountain to fill her.

She wondered how many times in a day she had to go to the toilet.

Mu Shuangshuang foolishly thought.

It was at this moment that a familiar warmth suddenly appeared beside her, a familiar scent filled her nostrils, and she turned to see Lu Yuanfeng next to her, staring into the kitchen.

But he was just looking at the wall, not at Mu Xiangxiang.

Because he remembered Shuangshuang had once told him not to look at other women.

Seeing Lu Yuanfeng looking so seriously at the wall, Mu Shuangshuang burst into laughter: "I permit you to look at my little aunt!"

Only then did Lu Yuanfeng glance at Mu Xiangxiang, and even he was startled by her eating manner.

"Do you think your little aunt has some sort of illness? I've never seen anyone in the military eat like this."

"Probably, and what's really scary is that she's not even gaining weight!"

Normally speaking, eating should provide nutrition, and with nutrition, one gains weight, unless there's a lot of exercise involved, but that wouldn't make sense either.

Mu Xiangxiang's way of eating, no amount of running could burn all those calories.

"Forget it, let's stop talking about her. Maybe she's just born this way!"

Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng watched Mu Xiangxiang for the time it takes for an incense stick to burn, and she finished eating like a pig at the trough.

After eating, she tossed the bowl aside, wiped her mouth, not bothering to fix her messy hair.

"Xiangxiang, are you still hungry? Shall I make you more?" Old Mrs. Mu asked kindly.

"No need, Mom, you go take a nap, Xiangxiang wants to sit here for a while!"

"This..." Old Mrs. Mu still wanted to chat with her daughter.

"Mom, if you don't leave, I won't talk to you anymore in the future!"

Old Mrs. Mu had no choice but to leave.

As soon as Old Mrs. Mu left, Mu Xiangxiang immediately shut the kitchen door.

Seeing her mysterious look, Mu Shuangshuang told Lu Yuanfeng a few things and quietly followed her.

What happened next was truly shocking.

Mu Xiangxiang hugged a slop bucket and began to vomit violently. After a break from vomiting, Mu Shuangshuang saw her stick her finger down her throat.

Another round of heaving...

Mu Shuangshuang finally understood why Mu Xiangxiang didn't gain weight.

She probably learned from someone, eating and then inducing vomiting, so she could eat whatever she wanted without worrying about gaining weight.

But isn't this the method many women in modern times use to lose weight?

How does Mu Xiangxiang know?

Of course, Mu Shuangshuang didn't think Mu Xiangxiang, like her, was from another time.

She just thought that a woman's love for beauty knows no age.

Judging by Mu Xiangxiang's skilled actions, it wasn't her first time.

If this continues, problems will arise sooner or later.

In the kitchen, Mu Xiangxiang, after finishing vomiting and rinsing her mouth with water, felt hungry again.

The inducing vomiting method was one her eldest sister had heard from other ladies as a slimming trick.

Mu Xiangxiang had been a glutton since childhood, always eating twice as much as others, and it got worse with age.

But every time she ate till she was stuffed, and kept gaining weight.

Finally finding this method, Mu Xianxian dared not try it, so Mu Xiangxiang gave it a go, and for almost a year, she ate as much as she wanted without a care.

Seeing that Mu Xiangxiang was about to get up, Mu Shuangshuang quickly ran away.

She went over to Lu Yuanfeng.

"Fengzi, let's go quickly!"

"Aren't you going to confront your grandma and your little aunt?" Lu Yuanfeng asked curiously.

He wasn't sure what Shuangshuang saw, but it seemed she was letting it go.

"No, you don't know, my little aunt is crazy..."

Mu Shuangshuang shared everything she saw with Lu Yuanfeng, who was equally surprised.

He had never heard of someone eating and then throwing it up.

The two of them headed home together.

Mu Shuangshuang also shared this matter with Mu Dashan and Yu Si Niang.

Their reactions were quite similar to Lu Yuanfeng's.

But since Mu Xiangxiang was after all Mu Dashan's sister, he did have feelings for her.

"How did Xiangxiang turn out like this? She was such a well-behaved child before."

Mu Dashan remembered her following him at the age of three.

However, from the age of five, Mu Xiangxiang started going astray, and no one in the family dared to challenge her for anything.

Whatever she wanted, had to be given, otherwise Old Mrs. Mu would beat them.

"Dad, I don't know either, but if my little aunt continues like this, something will surely happen, and it might even become fatal!"

She couldn't explain those stomach cancers to Mu Dashan, as he wouldn't understand even if she did.

Mu Xiangxiang's defiant behavior was definitely unacceptable.

"Shuangshuang's father, do you think we should tell Dad and Mom about this?" Yu Si Niang hesitated before speaking.

In theory, the third branch shouldn't interfere with this matter.

But it's also a matter of life, if Mu Xiangxiang really dies because of this, it would also be quite upsetting, as they're all under the same roof after all.

"This..." Mu Dashan was also troubled.

If they don't talk, his sister might be lost, but if they do, would their parents believe it?

Chapter 628: It's Best to Reap Without Effort (Third Update)

"Fengzi, do you think we should get involved in this matter?"

Mu Dashan proactively asked Lu Yuanfeng.

An outsider sees clearly, while those involved are confused!

The people from the third branch are all from the Old Mu Family, the answer they give may not be accurate.

"Third Uncle, if it were me, I think we should get involved in this matter! Whether this person is Shuangshuang's aunt or not.

Life is more important than anything else; we talk about it for peace of mind. As for how to handle it, that's something Shuangshuang's grandparents should consider!"

Lu Yuanfeng's words calmed Mu Dashan's anxious heart instantly.

No matter what, Mu Xiangxiang is still his sister, he can't leave her to die without helping.

But he still sought Shuangshuang's opinion.

"Shuangshuang, what do you think about this matter? Should we help your aunt?" Mu Dashan asked.

Mu Shuangshuang answered, "Dad, I have no opinion, I support Fengzi's point of view, let's do as he says."

In Mu Shuangshuang's heart, even though Mu Xiangxiang has a bad character and has caused many troubles for the third branch.

Mu Shuangshuang herself doesn't like her, but it's not to the point of life and death.

She is willing to act as a messenger.

"Then according to Shuangshuang and Fengzi's words, I will go to the main house to talk to your grandparents about this matter." Mu Dashan stood up, holding onto the chair.

"Dad, there's no rush for this matter, catching a thief requires evidence, we need Grandpa to see Aunt picking her throat, that's more convincing than any words."

"Shuangshuang thinks things through thoroughly, let's wait until dinner to deal with this matter!"

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As soon as lunch was over, Mu Danian was already shouting about not resting and going out to work.

"Dad, what are we resting for? Hurry up and distribute the afternoon tasks so we can finish them and go home to rest. I don't want to eat Second Brother and Second Sister-in-law's leftovers for dinner."

Old Mu felt a surge of emotion, almost bringing tears to his eyes.

For so many years, his sons were lazy, one more than the other, and now finally someone wants to work.

It seems Shuang's method is effective.

Old Mu decided to continue using this method in the Old Mu Family, rewarding and punishing clearly.

"You can work whenever you want! The afternoon tasks are still distributed the same way, whoever finishes first eats first, and they can eat as much as they want!"

Mu Danian heard Old Mu's words with a smug look on his face.

"See, even Dad supports me going to work."

The people from the second branch heard Mu Danian's words, and their expressions instantly fell.

"Fifth, you don't want to rest, but you can't make us not rest. You eat to your fill alone, but we have a family to feed, with kids. Think about it, Gou Dan is so young, if he doesn't rest at noon, can his body handle it?" Mu Dazhong said.

"Exactly, Fifth, this work is more fun when done together as a family, why are you in such a hurry?" Mrs. Lin spoke confidently.

If you didn't know her, you wouldn't guess Mrs. Lin had a miscarriage, because she looked too normal.

Her complexion was rosy, her cheeks plump, and even her arms gained weight from lying on the kang all day.

"Mind your own business, if you want to be lazy it's your problem. I, Mu Danian, am diligent, if you have the ability, you can also go work." Mu Danian shouted unceremoniously.

"You said it, Fifth, don't regret it!" Mu Dazhong rolled up his sleeves and laid down the challenge.

He didn't believe it, so many people from the second branch, yet they couldn't outdo Fifth alone.

"I said it, what about it?" Mu Danian replied.

"Gou Dan's mother, let's go work now and show Fifth what we're capable of!"

After Mu Dazhong spoke, he grabbed a sickle and carried a bamboo basket, and hurried out of the Old Mu Family with Mrs. Lin.

Just as they stepped outside the courtyard, Mrs. Lin regretted it.

"Daddy Gou Dan, are we too foolish to go work at noon? Nobody else is moving."

Mu Dazhong also felt Mrs. Lin made sense, earlier he was only focused on arguing with Fifth, and didn't consider that at this time, there are few people working on the fields.

"You're right, this work is endless, but the resting time is just this little bit.

Besides, we're working ourselves to death, these crops aren't ours in the end, they'll end up in Mom and Big Brother's pockets.

Now Big Brother is about to go to the county, if we go with him, we won't manage without some money in hand."

Mu Dazhong's mind was quickly turning.

He analyzed the future with Mrs. Lin, analyzing very thoroughly.

Having been a 'turtle' at the Old Mu Family for a long time, Mu Dazhong almost forgot about his smart mind.

"We need to consider this. The matter of tricking the eldest sister-in-law before, that stinky girl from the third branch cheated me out of three taels of silver, causing us to lose our savings.

Now if we don't find a way to fill this gap, I estimate if we go to the county, we won't be able to live like Big Brother's family." Mrs. Lin said.

Just thinking about Mrs. Jin wearing clothes that cost two taels of silver made Mrs. Lin envious and resentful.

If only she could wear clothes worth two taels of silver, that would be as good as several months' worth of food for the whole family.

"How about... we do this? Anyway, everyone is resting at home now, we go to other people's fields to steal some rice, and we won't be discovered.

Then we'll hide these rice stalks, and when everyone finishes harvesting, we'll take them out and say we picked these in the fields!"

In farming households, there's the practice of picking rice.

But generally, it's after others have harvested and carried away the rice from the fields, when some elderly people with free time, or young children go to the fields to pick rice.

If you're lucky, during a double harvest, you can collect one or two small sacks of rice stalks.

Mrs. Lin and Mu Dazhong quickened their pace, entered the fields, and started stuffing freshly harvested rice stalks from other people's fields into their bamboo baskets little by little.

In a short time, a basket was full of rice.

The two of them, like thieves, carried the basket to the village's notorious abandoned house.

This place has really become an abandoned house now.

Wang Fugui was beaten here to the point of disability, the kind where he couldn't wake up, so the villagers felt the place was unlucky.

No one comes here anymore.

But for Mu Dazhong and Mrs. Lin, this place is the best for storing things.

If discovered, they would run; if not found out, it would mean heaven was helping them.

In total, Mu Dazhong stole four baskets of rice stalks, nearly destroying everything harvested in the morning.

Including the acre of fertile land at Shuangshuang's house.

However, Mu Shuangshuang's acre of fertile land was relatively far, so it suffered less damage.

After finishing all this, Mu Dazhong and Mrs. Lin lay in the shade of a tree, looking at each other, laughing heartily.

"Daddy Gou Dan, how about we stop working and go through other people's fields every noon? I can see those rice stalks, once threshed, could yield quite a lot."

Mrs. Lin really didn't want to work anymore; compared to facing the soil every day, she preferred this way of making money with just one outing.

Chapter 629: Kill on Sight (Fourth Update)

"This won't work. If people find out we're getting money without working, what if they suspect us?"

Mu Dazhong wasn't stupid. The more bad things you do, the more you have to act as if nothing happened.

Otherwise, how could you make a fortune quietly?

"So, are you saying we should keep working?" Mrs. Lin asked, puzzled.

"Absolutely. From today onwards, we'll complete our tasks first, and after that, we'll find ways to make money. Anyway, we won't worry about not having enough to eat."

The ways to make money Mu Dazhong mentioned were actually similar to what he did this afternoon.

Anyway, sneaking around was the way to go.

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In the afternoon, after having enough rest, Mu Shuangshuang and a few others went out to continue harvesting rice.

Mu Shuangshuang wasn't there in the morning, so Yu Si Niang was left with a bit more than an acre to harvest.

It's estimated that after about half an incense stick's time, the two should be able to finish.

Holding a sickle, Mu Shuangshuang paused while cutting the rice.

"Yuan Feng, have you checked over here?" Mu Shuangshuang pointed at the bundle of rice next to her and asked Lu Yuanfeng.

"No, I haven't checked that area yet!"

Lu Yuanfeng was different from others when carrying loads; he carried two lines together and hadn't touched Shuangshuang's part at all.

"That's strange. This was placed here by me this morning; the rice straw leaves shouldn't be this fresh!"

Mu Shuangshuang said as she walked over to look at another place.

She found out that the other places weren't like this.

The rice from their family had been stolen.

Eggs stolen at noon, and now rice; Mu Shuangshuang was feeling really distressed.

Mu Shuangshuang looked at the nearby villagers in the fields; they seemed unaffected, as if they hadn't lost any rice. Could the thief have only stolen from her family?

The more Mu Shuangshuang thought about it, the angrier she became.

She called Lu Yuanfeng over and explained the situation to him.

Lu Yuanfeng was also quite shocked.

Er Gui Village hadn't had rice thieves for many years.

Though thieves did exist, Lu Yuanfeng's neighbor, Aunt Zhang, had once stolen Lu Yuanfeng's five-flavor pork in front of many people.

"Shuangshuang, should we catch this person?" Lu Yuanfeng asked.

"Catch, of course! I bet this person packed my family's rice as if it were their own gathered rice and took it away in a sack.

She likely strikes when there are fewer people around, like noon and evening. Yuan Feng, quickly check if the rice you stacked on the field ridge is missing."

Lu Yuanfeng rushed to check, shook his head after inspecting.

"No problem, no one's touched that rice."

With that, Mu Shuangshuang was even more certain that the person wanted to gather bit by bit.

"Yuan Feng, these days, we'll wait for this thief to show up and make them famous in Er Gui Village!"

Mu Shuangshuang squinted her eyes, a momentary gleam swirling in her gaze.

"Then we'll keep a watch here both at noon and at night." Lu Yuanfeng suggested.

The two made a plan, just waiting for the thief to appear.

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...

The most satisfied person in the afternoon was Mr. Mu.

The usually lazy second house suddenly seemed enlightened, working not only quickly but also losing the habit of faking excuses for laziness; they didn't even visit the toilet the entire afternoon.

Mr. Mu even thought the second house wasn't his lazy son anymore.

However, on second thought, for a man to act responsible, it would only take a matter of time to stand tall and firm.

Based on this, Mr. Mu made a big move, bringing out a rooster as a reward. The person who worked the most could enjoy that rooster alone.

As soon as he announced this, the whole Old Mu Family erupted.

"Dad, are you serious?" Mu Dazhong was already in a good mood after stealing quite a bit of rice at noon; hearing there was chicken to eat, he felt elated.

"Of course, when have I ever lied to you?"

Mr. Mu straightened his back, and under the expectant gazes of his sons, he truly felt like the head of the household.

"True, dad always keeps his word, then our second house will definitely give it a try!" Mu Dazhong chuckled and patted his chest to make a promise.

Mu Danian was so mad, his mouth twisted.

This competition was inherently unfair; the second house had their family helping them, and anyone lifting a finger had more than him.

He was all alone; what could he compete with?

What Mu Danian thought of, Mr. Mu naturally considered as well.

He added, "Today, we're not comparing house against house, but person against person. As long as you work well, dad will give you a reward.

Da Lang isn't around these days. If he were, we'd include him."

Meaning, as long as you personally excelled, you'd get a reward from Mr. Mu.

This undoubtedly motivated the Old Mu Family folks.

Everyone worked harder and faster.

The second house and Mu Danian were lazy, but that didn't mean they weren't fast.

They swung their sickles here and there, surprisingly surpassing the honest guy Mu Dajiang.

At dusk, Mr. Mu announced work was done.

The person who worked the most was naturally Mu Dazhong; he ate first, and the rest according to individual contributions.

In a single afternoon, they harvested two acres of land, something the few of the Old Mu Family hadn't achieved since birth.

Mr. Mu was so happy he was practically ecstatic.

Mrs. Lin nudged Mu Dazhong's arm, prompting him to speak quickly.

"Dad, Gou Dan's mother and I would like to do a bit more; you and the others go back first."

Having started early and ended late this afternoon, Mr. Mu was just short of elevating the second house to the skies and decided that, regardless of the situation, he must take the second house with him.

Mr. Mu led a whole group away in grand procession.

Mu Dazhong and Mrs. Lin slowed their pace.

"Daddy Gou Dan, when should we make our move?" Mrs. Lin eyed the golden rice on the field ridge, all she saw were money signs.

"Don't rush, let's wait and see!"

When up to mischief, Mu Dazhong appeared to have a commanding presence.

The two faked sincerity, moving slowly as they worked a bit more in the field ridge, gradually, darkness descended.

Villagers no longer lingered in the fields and headed home.

Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng carted the stacked rice from the field ridge back to the village threshing ground with the ox cart, taking more than ten trips.

The threshing ground was no worry for thieves because by then, someone would watch over it, or they would light several torches to thresh the rice all night long with a stone roller.

It was the last load, and by now darkness had completely set in, the field ridge was devoid of people.

But Mu Shuangshuang felt the person was still there.

"Yuan Feng, this trip, you drive the ox cart alone, I'll stay here and see who exactly it is!" Mu Shuangshuang said.

"Shuangshuang, how about I stay with you? We don't know who's stealing, what if this person has some skills?" Lu Yuanfeng expressed his worry.

"Yuan Feng, with your ox cart here, they wouldn't dare show up; you go feed the ox and get the cart set up before coming back. If those people are really skilled, I won't come out, alright?"

Lu Yuanfeng wanted to say something more, but Mu Shuangshuang raised her hand, speaking with sincerity, "I swear, I'll wait for you before making a move!"

Chapter 630: For the Children's Sake (1st Update)

"Fengzi, you should hurry up and go, I promise not to cause trouble!"

Mu Shuangshuang urged Lu Yuanfeng to leave quickly; she couldn't wait any longer to see who this thief was.

Just as she finished speaking, Lu Yuanfeng reached out and pulled her into his arms, sitting together on the cart.

He said, "Shuangshuang, be good! We'll come back together to catch this thief later!"

After saying that, Lu Yuanfeng drove the ox forward, worried Shuangshuang might change her mind.

The ox cart gradually moved away from the field ridge.

"Shuangshuang, don't be angry! It's not that I don't trust your abilities, but there are some things we shouldn't risk.

This is how it is today, and when the weather gets colder in a month, we'll go into the mountains, and you must follow behind me, understand?"

Mu Shuangshuang nodded heavily.

She wasn't upset at all; in fact, she felt a sweetness in her heart.

Because in this matter, Lu Yuanfeng put her safety first, and she couldn't be happier.

Besides, the rice they harvested today had already been transported to the threshing ground, and even if they didn't catch the thief today, they wouldn't lose much.

They drove the ox cart around the threshing ground, spreading the rice out, and then returned the ox cart to Lu Yuanfeng's home.

At noon, Lu Yuanfeng had cut a bundle of grass and placed it in the wooden shed in his yard, which was just right for the ox's dinner.

After finishing everything, the sky had completely darkened, and walking on the road, only human shadows could be seen, nothing else.

Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng hurriedly rushed back to the field ridge, squatting in the field for a while, but the thief never showed up.

"Fengzi, should we continue waiting?" Mu Shuangshuang asked, looking at the increasingly darkening sky.

The field ridge was quiet, with not a single shadow in sight.

Instead, as night fell, the autumn wind gradually picked up, making the temperature suddenly drop.

"Let's go back; I think this thief probably only comes when everyone takes a nap at noon!"

Mu Shuangshuang nodded in agreement.

It was indeed time to go back; it was getting late, and the two of them had been busy all afternoon without resting, and the thief couldn't escape anyway.

When they returned home, Yu Si Niang had already prepared dinner and set the table.

The whole family was just waiting for Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng.

Yu Si Niang didn't ask why the two kids came back so late, only urging them to eat quickly.

The dinner was very sumptuous, with meat and fish, all for nutrition.

The three little kids were already impatient to eat, each looking eagerly at Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng.

"What are you looking at? Hurry up and pick up your chopsticks, get ready to eat!" Mu Shuangshuang laughed.

The children had indeed worked hard today, harvesting rice without complaining of tiredness.

Especially Little Zhi, who fell twice but got up without crying.

"Mm!"

In response, Yuanbao, Little Zhi, and Xiao Han all began wolfing down their food.

"Eat slowly, no one is going to snatch it from you!" Mu Shuangshuang said softly.

The three children's speed didn't decrease.

Yu Si Niang, being a mother, looked at the kids like this and felt very distressed. She glanced at Shuangshuang, indicating whether they should keep the children from going out tomorrow.

Yu Si Niang felt that if she worked slowly, she could still finish those few acres of land.

"Mom, it's okay, it's good for the three kids to work a bit and get some exercise. I didn't let them do heavy work, they won't get hurt."

Mu Shuangshuang understood Yu Si Niang's meaning.

A mother never wants to see her children suffer.

Especially since the three kids are still young.

But many things have to be taught from a young age.

If Xiao Han and Yuanbao really want to pursue a career in the future, they must first understand the grains and the seasons.

They come from a farming family and should understand the life of a farming family better than anyone.

The Da Ning Dynasty values agriculture highly, and if one day he can be involved in court policies, he might even offer some insights tailored to local conditions.

"That's true, but seeing the three kids gobbling down their food makes me think they're definitely suffering.

I'd rather work harder myself than have them do so much work at such a young age.

Your father was the same way, working from a young age, and now look at his health..."

Yu Si Niang said with red-rimmed eyes.

Originally, Mu Dashan was a bit preoccupied tonight, but seeing Yu Si Niang like this made him feel even worse.

"Mom, it's really okay. How about this, we let the kids choose their own activities, let them decide when they want to work, and when they don't, they can stay and play at home, how about that?"

Mu Shuangshuang really could empathize with Yu Si Niang.

After being stifled as a daughter-in-law in the Old Mu Family for so long, she finally got her freedom.

She just wanted to give the kids the best.

Including Yuanbao, who, in Yu Si Niang's heart, was like her own child. Whatever Little Zhi and Xiao Han had, she'd prepare the same for Yuanbao.

Sometimes, she'd even take the initiative to bathe Yuanbao, wash his hair and such.

These are the things a mother would do for her own child; most people wouldn't be so attentive.

Just as Mu Shuangshuang finished speaking, the three kids shook their heads in unison.

"Mom, we want to go together."

"Auntie, I want to be with Second Brother and Sister Shuangshuang."

The kids couldn't articulate the big reasons, but they knew exactly what they wanted to do.

"Second Brother, you and Auntie explain that I want to go out with you, and Little Zhi and I can go out to play anytime, but it's only a few days we can work; we're not afraid of hard work."

Yuanbao used his chubby little hands to push Lu Yuanfeng's shoulder.

Yuanbao is more mature than most kids, and he's quite clever.

He never forces himself; if he says he likes it, then he truly does.

Lu Yuanfeng was moved, telling Yu Si Niang, "Aunt Si, if Yuanbao and the others are willing to work, let them be; kids who exercise don't get sick easily.

I did all sorts of work when I was little and never got sick, very healthy. As long as we keep things moderate, nothing will go wrong."

With Lu Yuanfeng stepping in so diplomatically, Yu Si Niang couldn't say much.

"Alright, let them work for a few more days; oh, right, you're going to town the day after tomorrow, so let's come back early tomorrow afternoon to save some energy so it's not too tiring."

"No worries. Mom, Fengzi and I know what we're doing, you can rest easy, we can take care of ourselves.

By the way, Mom, since it's getting colder, I was thinking to get some fabric and make everyone a winter coat with the cotton Grandpa brought.

If it's not enough, we'll buy more from Aunt Xiao Yun's house, what do you think?" Mu Shuangshuang asked.

"Of course, it's a great idea. We don't have any decent clothes for the cold weather, and I just talked to your Aunt Xiao Yun about this yesterday."

Talking about buying fabric for winter clothes successfully shifted Yu Si Niang's focus.